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## Portuguese Cultural Standards from a German Perspective – A Qualitative Study of Cultural Differences in the Organizational Environment

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Master in International Studies

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Iscte - University Institute of Lisbon

October, 2022



SOCIOLOGIA  
E POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS

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History Department

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# RESUMO

Devido à globalização, os encontros interculturais ocorrem todos os dias na vida profissional e empresarial internacional. A fim de construir competência intercultural e assegurar uma cooperação bem sucedida entre pessoas de diferentes origens culturais, as diferenças culturais devem ser reconhecidas e sensibilizadas. O objectivo desta tese é identificar os normas culturais portuguesas a partir da perspectiva alemã com referência ao ambiente organizacional.

A metodologia utilizada para identificar normas culturais é o Método das Normas Culturais. Esta metodologia segue uma abordagem qualitativa e ajuda a explorar as diferenças culturais a um nível mais profundo e mais específico da situação do que outros modelos culturais no terreno.

A fim de obter resultados válidos e representativos, o estudo empírico de investigação desta tese passou por várias fases. Primeiro, foram realizadas entrevistas narrativas com dez nacionais alemães que trabalham ou trabalharam em Portugal durante pelo menos um ano. Posteriormente, as histórias dos entrevistados foram examinadas para incidentes críticos, utilizando uma análise qualitativa do conteúdo. Com base na menção repetida de incidentes críticos semelhantes pela maioria dos entrevistados, foram identificadas normas culturais preliminares portuguesas. Estas normas culturais foram então avaliados através de feedback dos entrevistados, bem como de pessoas que não participaram nas entrevistas.

Por último, foram identificadas sete normas culturais finais portuguesas de uma perspectiva alemã em relação ao ambiente de trabalho: Forte Compreensão da Hierarquia; Emocionalidade e Sensibilidade; Comportamento Indireto; Ineficiência na Comunicação e Tomada de Decisão; Fluxo Irregular do Tempo; Planeamento Flexível a Curto Prazo e Improvisação; Significado das Relações Interpessoais.

## **Palavras-chave:**

Normas Culturais, Interação Intercultural e Transcultural, Ambiente Organizacional, Cultura Nacional, Portugal, Alemanha.

# ABSTRACT

Due to globalization, intercultural encounters occur every day in international working and business environments. To build intercultural competence and ensure successful cooperation between people of different cultural backgrounds, cultural differences must be recognized and made aware of. The objective of this thesis is to identify Portuguese cultural standards from the German perspective with reference to the organizational environment.

The methodology used to identify cultural standards is the Cultural Standards Method. This methodology follows a qualitative approach and helps to explore cultural differences on a deeper and more situation-specific level than other cultural models in the field.

To obtain valid and representative results, the empirical research study of this thesis went through several phases. First, narrative interviews were conducted with ten German nationals who have been working or have worked in Portugal for at least one year. Subsequently, the interviewees' stories were examined for critical incidents using qualitative content analysis. Based on the repeated mention of similar critical incidents by most of the interviewees, preliminary Portuguese cultural standards were identified. These cultural standards were then evaluated through feedback from the interviewees as well as from people who did not participate in the interviews.

Lastly, seven final Portuguese cultural standards were identified from a German perspective in relation to the work environment: Strong Understanding of Hierarchy; Emotionality and Sensitivity; Indirectness; Inefficiency in Communication and Decision-making; Irregular Flow of Time; Flexible, Short-term Planning and Improvisation; Significance of Interpersonal Relations.

## **Keywords:**

Cultural Standards, Intercultural and Cross-Cultural interaction, Organizational Environment, National Culture, Portugal, Germany.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Due to constantly increasing globalization over the past decades, people from different cultural backgrounds interact every day in all areas of life. Many businesses and organizations operate transnationally, and a large proportion of people choose to live and work abroad. With these developments, intercultural encounters become increasingly important in the organizational and business context. Since people from diverse cultural backgrounds have different behaviors and perceive each other differently, as will be shown in this thesis, there is considerable potential for cultural misunderstandings in international work settings. When people are unaware of cultural differences between their colleagues or business partners, team and business goals may be jeopardized. Therefore, to enable effective and successful cooperation between people of different origins, cultural differences cannot be neglected but must be faced and made aware of.

Because intercultural interactions are critical to success in the international workplace, many authors and researchers in recent decades have explored cultural differences and developed cultural models for better intercultural comprehension. With the help of such models, people who work internationally can increase their cultural awareness and better understand their culturally diverse colleagues or business partners.

The author of this thesis, who is of German origin, has been living, studying, and working in Portugal for the last two years. During this time, he has personally experienced many differences compared to German culture, both in everyday and professional life. For this reason, he wanted to find out more about the cultural differences between Germans and Portuguese on a scientific basis.

However, the motivation behind this thesis is not solely personal. It also arose with the background that Germany and Portugal have close political and economic relations reaching back many years. From a political standpoint, both countries represent the same European, democratic values and are largely aligned in key political questions. Furthermore, Germany was significantly involved in the establishment of democratic structures in Portugal after the Carnation Revolution leading to the fall of the dictatorship in 1974 and promoted Portugal's accession to the European Communities (now European Union) in 1986. From an economic standpoint, Germany is not only one of Portugal's most important trading partners but also the largest foreign employer in the country (Auswärtiges Amt, 2022). Now, there are over 400 large and medium-sized German companies in Portugal, which are directly and indirectly responsible for around 50,000 jobs (eu2020, 2020). As a result, many Germans either have their own business in Portugal or work for German or multinational companies in the country.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate possible cultural differences between Germans and Portuguese in the workplace. The ultimate goal is to identify Portuguese cultural standards from a German perspective using the Cultural Standards Method - a qualitative research methodology. Based on experiences and perceptions of Germans working with Portuguese, intercultural encounters are examined for critical events to identify cultural standards. In contrast to other cultural models, this method allows deeper, more precise, and situation-specific insights into cultural differences between two cultures. Due to the fact that the cultural standards are determined from the German point of view, they are only applicable to the comparison between German and Portuguese culture.

The structure of this master thesis is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter explains the topic, objective, and methodology, and addresses the need for and relevance of the underlying research study to intercultural encounters in the international workplace. Furthermore, a structural overview of the thesis is presented. Chapter two deals with the theoretical foundations of this thesis. First, the concept of culture is explored. It then discusses cross-cultural and intercultural research, its relevance to the organizational and business environment, and explains important cultural models and concepts in the field.

Chapter three provides an overview of country-specific information such as the geographic, demographic, and economic situation of Portugal and Germany before giving a brief overview of their respective historical backgrounds. Subsequently, both countries are compared on the basis of Geert Hofstede's cultural dimension model and Erin Meyer's eight culture scales model. To provide a comprehensible view of the methodology that was applied, chapter four explains the Culture Standard Method and its different phases in detail.

Chapter five describes the research study and its results. First, the research details such as the composition of the sample and the realization of the interviews are addressed. Then, the identified Portuguese cultural standards from a German perspective are presented. Finally, to verify the identified cultural standards, feedback from respondents and outsiders is given.

In chapter six the Portuguese cultural standards are compared to Hofstede's cultural dimensions as well as to Meyer's scales of culture. Based on what was analyzed in chapter three, possible correspondences or differences between the cultural standards and the models of the two respective authors can be identified. Chapter seven looks at possible recommendations for Germans who work or are going to work in Portugal based on the identified Portuguese cultural standards.

To better contextualize the empirical research study of this thesis, chapter eight addresses its limitations. Finally, the ninth and last chapter summarizes the main findings of this thesis. Additionally, this chapter outlines the potential practical benefits of the results and provides an outlook for further related studies.

## 2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

### 2.1 Culture - Towards a Definition

Over the past centuries, there have been several attempts to provide an accurate definition of the term and the concept of culture. As described by Kluckhohn and Kroeber (1952), the concept of culture was first defined in more detail in its modern sense in the English language by Edward Tylor in the year of 1871. Tylor believes that “culture, or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1889, p.1).

The American ethnologist Clifford Geertz (1973) describes during his research a concept of culture, which should be of great importance for the following cultural studies. He advocates a concept of culture that is semiotic, hence based on the interpretation of symbols. Geertz believes “ [...] that man is an animal suspended in a web of significance he himself has spun, [it is] culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (Geertz, 1973, p.5). Taking Geertz’s definition into account that people interpret symbols, that is, gestures, behaviors, signs, and everything that is part of daily life, it becomes clear that there is something beneath the surface of what can be seen that causes people to interpret these symbols differently.

In his works such as *The Hidden Dimension* (1966) or *Beyond Culture* (1976), the American anthropologist Edward Hall elaborates on unconscious attributions of meaning that are indispensable for explaining culture. He states that all cultures have a certain set of characteristics in common, as they are defined by “ [...] their own identity, language, systems of nonverbal communication, material culture, history, and ways of doing things” (Hall, 1976, p.2). Even though according to Hall, every culture is different, he outlines three characteristics that can be seen as universal to describe culture (Hall, 1976):

- *Culture is not inherent but learned*
- *All aspects and levels of culture are interdependent and affect each other*
- *Culture is always shared by a group and delimits the group’s boundaries*

Since humans, as mentioned earlier, move in a web of cultural realities, Hall claims that culture means everything and influences every area of human existence (Hall, 1976).

The Dutch Social psychologist and cultural scientist Geert Hofstede later further developed these concepts. He describes the patterns of reasoning, feeling, or possible behavior that have been acquired over the course of a lifetime as *mental software* by which

every human is guided. The human mental software is programmed by all social contacts, environments, and the resulting experiences that accompany people in their early stages of life. For example, within the family and the community, with friends, in school, or at the workplace. Thus, members of one culture have common programmed ways of thinking that differentiate them from members of another culture. Hofstede sees many earlier definitions of culture as limited and advocates for a much deeper understanding (Hofstede et al., 2010). To make his argument comprehensible, he illustrates the mental program of each person on three unique levels as can be seen in Figure 2.1.

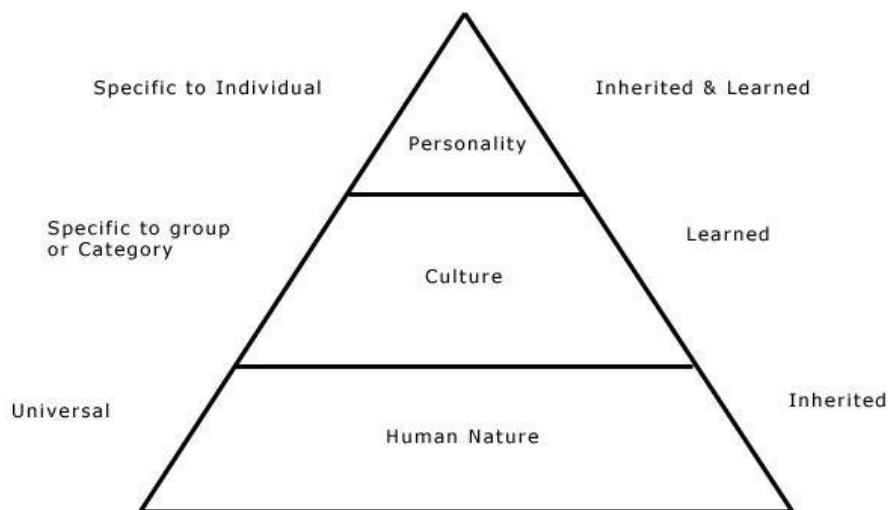


Figure 2.1 – Hofstede’s levels of mental programming<sup>1</sup>

The basis of the model is formed by *Human Nature*, which applies universally to all people. It is anchored in the genes of human beings and determines not only human psychology and physical functionalities but also includes the ability to feel universal emotions such as love, sadness, fear, or the necessity to establish relationships with others.

The interpretation and expression of these emotions and feelings, however, are dictated by the respective and specific *Culture* one has learned. *Personality*, in contrast, is a unique composition of mental schemes for each individual and is partially inherited but also learned, influenced by culture and individual experiences (Hofstede et al., 2010).

After presenting different views and definitions explaining the concept of culture by influential scholars in this field, it can be stated that culture is a man-made, all-encompassing phenomenon of human existence that is difficult to describe in its entirety and due to its complexity.

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<sup>1</sup> Hofstede et al., 2010, p.6

### 2.1.1 The Cultural Onion and Layers of Culture

Hofstede et al. (2010) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) describe that culture and its differences from each other are expressed on various levels. While Hofstede refers to culture as an onion, as can be seen in Figure 2.2, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner refer to layers of culture, as expressed in Figure 2.3. Nevertheless, both concepts are similar in structure and are therefore explained and illustrated alongside each other in the following.

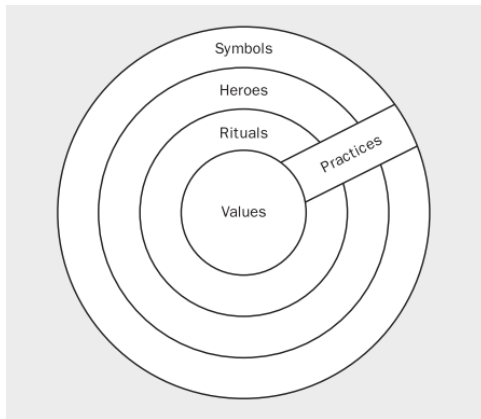


Figure 2.2 - Cultural onion<sup>2</sup>

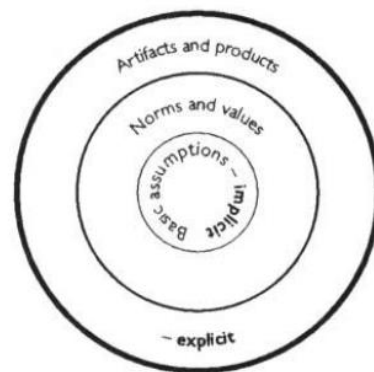


Figure 2.3 - Layers of culture<sup>3</sup>

The outer, visible layer of culture is expressed through *Symbols* in Hofstede's and *Products* as well as *Artefacts* in Trompenaars's and Hampden-Turner's model. Both refer to explicit cultural expressions such as gestures or language, architecture, food, or art. *Symbols*, *Products*, and *Artefacts* represent the visible surface of a culture and have a special and unique significance for people of a respective society due to deeper lying cultural peculiarities (Hofstede et al., 2010; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997).

In Hofstede's onion model, the two middle layers are represented by *Heroes* and *Rituals*. *Heroes* serve as idols and role models for certain behavior and possess highly valued attributes for the respective culture, regardless of whether they are real or fictitious, dead, or alive. *Rituals* are behaviors that are basically redundant to achieving essential objectives but are considered socially relevant. Together with *Symbols*, they are summarised under the term *Practices* and can be visibly observed by outsiders (Hofstede et al., 2010).

*Practices* reflect the inner, invisible core of a culture, which are referred to as *Values* - and additionally as *Norms* in Trompenaars's and Hampden-Turner's layers model. *Values* determine for the members of a culture what is good and what is bad. *Norms*, in contrast, represent the perceived meaning of what is right and wrong within society. Both are

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<sup>2</sup> Hofstede et al., 2010, p.6

<sup>3</sup> Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997, p.22

indispensable for the development and tradition of any culture (Hofstede et al., 2010; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997).

Furthermore, it needs to be mentioned that the innermost core of Trompenaars's and Hampden-Turner's layers model deals with the question of human existence. They argue that the natural human environment can be seen as the original starting point, the basis of all deepest and unconscious assumptions on which values, norms, and the resulting visible cultural peculiarities were eventually built (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997).

According to what has just been described, the question arises as to what extent and how fast the respective levels of culture can change within a certain time frame. Hofstede believes that cultural change can take place rather quickly for *Practices*, but only very slowly for the deeply rooted *Values* of a society. While people are able to learn new behaviors very easily, for example, to adapt to the world's rapid technological changes, values and norms that have been traditioned from generation to generation and learned in childhood remain to be considerably stable at the core of a society (Hofstede et al., 2010).

### **Hofstede's Layers of Culture**

Hofstede also describes layers of culture in his works but related this idea to the different groups a person belongs to in his or her life. He argues that all humans inevitably belong to more than one group, often simultaneously, and therefore include multiple layers of programming in their mental software. The levels Hofstede explains are defined by region, ethnicity, or religion. They can also be determined by gender, generation, or social class. Two further levels that are particularly relevant for this work, as subsequently explained, are the national and the organizational level (Hofstede et al., 2010). Within each of these levels, there are differences that are perceived as normal by belonging members and less normal by outsiders as they do not share the same mental program.

#### **2.1.2 National Culture and its Influence on the Organizational Environment**

Thomas (2010) argues that national culture gives meaning to individuals that grew up in the same country and to a large degree determines their feeling of belonging. National culture can be therefore considered the first orientation system into which not only a single person but a whole population of a country is born. For this reason, and because every member participates in the development of this system and the transmission of values and norms, national culture must be considered as an overarching construct that encompasses the collective mind of a country's population.

Hofstede thinks that nations should not be considered the very same as societies because a lot of the world's nations unite many different societies and thus cultures, which is



particularly the case in Africa. Societies in their definition – the development of social organizations – are more in line with the concept of culture than nations are. Nonetheless, particularly long-existing nations meet the criteria, such as a common national language or national political and educational systems, for citizens to share a far-reaching, common cultural programming (Hofstede, 1991; Hofstede et al. 2010).

In the context of intercultural interactions within organizations, the impact of national culture in relation to organizational culture also needs to be addressed. Adler and Gundersen (2008) contradict the widespread beliefs of many managers that an organizational culture compensates for national cultural differences on the part of employees or that cultural differences only need to be taken into account when doing business with foreign partners and clients. In their argumentation, they cite Hofstede's IBM study (shown on p.12) which displayed that employees of the same organization have different values and perceive and evaluate certain issues differently due to their nationality than their professional role, sex, or age. Thomas (2010) shares this view, arguing that most of the problems caused by cultural differences in the business world happen at the national cultural level rather than at the organizational or industrial culture level.

Hofstede (1991) elaborates on this matter by describing how and when values and norms become solidified in people and practices are learned throughout life on different levels. Below, Figure 2.4 shows that values, the innermost layer of the already described onion model, are learned early in the life of every person. This happens more or less until the age of ten at the levels of nationality and gender, with the family being the primary source of influence. In the further course of becoming an adult, values and norms on the occupational level are acquired in educational institutions such as schools or universities. Finally, organizational values, but mainly practices are learned in the workplace.

As explained in 2.1.1, the outer layers of the cultural onion can change comparatively quickly over a lifetime, but the inner core of values and norms may only be changed over generations and thus most likely not within an employment relationship in a company. Multinational employees of a company may therefore share the values of the organization, which are then reflected in common practices in their daily work. Nonetheless, most of the values of an employee are already deeply rooted at national and gender levels and usually cannot be decisively altered by organizational culture.

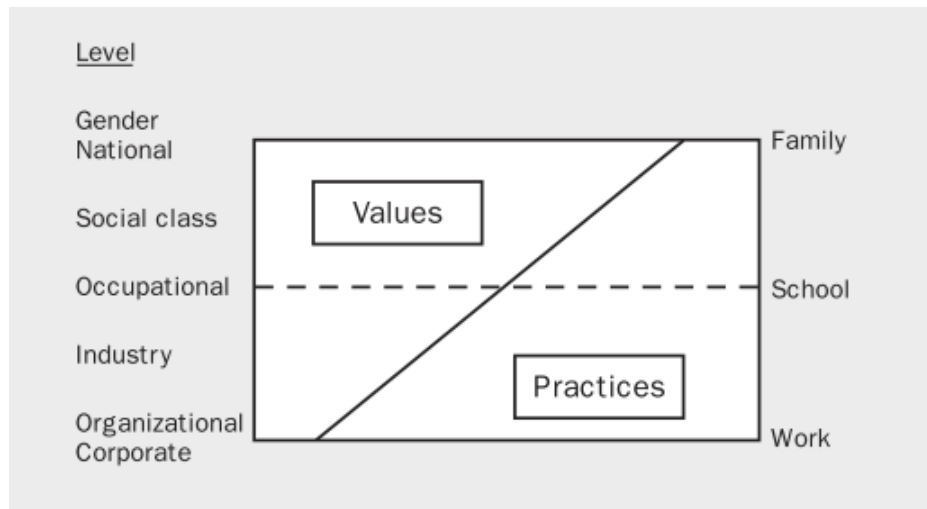


Figure 2.4 - Values and practices on different levels of culture<sup>4</sup>

However, this does not mean that the focus of cultural research in the field of the organizational and business environments should solely be on culture at the national level. Thomas (2010) argues that subcultures, for example, of economic sectors such as the finance or automobile industry or job-specific categories like IT technicians or salespeople, may strongly influence the behavior of its members, also outside of the respective organization.

Cultural differences at the national level have an undoubtedly great influence on multicultural cooperation within organizations and between multinational businesses. For this reason, and to identify problems and find solutions, cross-cultural and intercultural research is of considerable importance in this field.

## 2.2 Cross-cultural and Intercultural Research in the Field of Organizational and Business Environment

Before explaining this specific field of research, the terms *cross-cultural* and *intercultural* need to be clarified. While *cross-cultural* research refers to the cultural comparison of different nations and cultures, *intercultural* research is mostly concerned with the interaction between individuals of different nations, particularly cultures. Nonetheless, both terminologies are occasionally used interchangeably (Piller, 2009).

As mentioned in the introduction, globalization in the last century has led to people from diverse cultural backgrounds interacting with each other on a daily basis and in all areas of life. To gain a better understanding of intercultural human interaction in key areas such as

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<sup>4</sup> Hofstede et al., 2010, p.347

politics, economies, or educational systems, there is a great and ongoing need for cross-cultural and intercultural research.

Since this thesis is specifically concerned with cultural differences and intercultural interactions in organizational settings, it is necessary to demonstrate why cross-cultural research is particularly relevant to this area. Hofstede states that “one of the purposes of cross-cultural research [-collecting data at the level of nations-] is to promote cooperation among nations” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p.22). From this statement, cross-cultural research also has the purpose to promote cooperation between international businesses as well as intercultural collaboration within organizations.

Many businesses today operate across borders, and both managers, as well as employees, are not only traveling and doing business outside their own culture but also working in or leading multicultural teams. As a result, challenges emerge in cross-cultural and intercultural contexts that need to be explored, understood, and addressed. By doing so, research in this field may help to avoid serious and costly cultural misunderstandings and improve business and work efficiency. To ensure successful collaboration, managers must be aware of the cultural differences between themselves and their business partners or employees. Accordingly, they need to act sensitively when it comes to vital parts of business and organizational processes such as general communication, negotiations, or decision-making (Okoro, 2013). It is therefore also critical for managers and supervisors to adapt their management and leading styles to the culture in which they work, or even to multiple cultures if they lead a multicultural team or operation (Chaney and Martin, 2014). If the impact of cultural differences on such operational processes is not fully considered or neglected, successful collaboration and therefore business objectives may be jeopardized.

However, it is not only of great importance to explore and highlight cross-cultural challenges for managers but also for co-workers, as multinational teams have become as common in today's globalized world as doing business with people from other cultures. Even though intercultural interaction in the workplace is now more normal than special, challenges, as well as opportunities related to cultural differences, arise daily. On the one hand, companies benefit from various strategic advantages such as building intercultural competencies and increased creativity. On the other hand, and what is fundamentally the subject of the following research study, people tend to look at their culturally diverse co-workers from their own cultural perspective and correspondingly get an impression of them or their work ethic. As a consequence, cultural differences can cause misunderstandings in communication and interpersonal problems. Ultimately, this can lead to conflict, frustration, ineffective and slow working practices, and thus to unsatisfactory teamwork outcomes (Schneider and Barsoux, 2003).

To investigate cross-cultural interactions in specific contexts and research questions related to organizational and business settings, different types of research studies and approaches can be adopted. Adler (1984) identifies six different approaches and distinguishes between parochial, ethnocentric, polycentric, comparative management, geocentric, and synergistic studies. The research study conducted as part of this thesis is most likely to fall into the category of synergistic studies due to its nature and the potential application of its findings. This claim is supported by the fact that synergistic studies are essentially concerned with the interaction of culturally different individuals within a working environment, as is the case in the research study of this thesis.

However, to study cross-cultural interactions effectively, it is essential to understand cultural differences between interacting individuals based on their national culture. Fink et al. (2005) note that there are two main directions in the cross-cultural and intercultural studies literature on how to determine cultural differences. On the one hand, the research area has been strongly influenced by authors such as Hall (1966; 1976; 1990), Hofstede (1991; 2010; 2011), Schwartz (2006; 2012), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), and Javidan et al. (2006), who describe cultures and their differences to each other on the basis of cultural dimensions. On the other hand, there is literature that describes how to determine cultural differences on a deeper level, with German psychologist Thomas (1993; 2010) leading the way with his concept of cultural standards.

### **2.2.1 Research on Cultural Dimensions**

Several cultural models based on specific research studies have been developed over the last half century. These models mainly draw on so-called cultural dimensions which are supposed to describe culturally specific human behavior and help to understand and represent cultural differences between countries in various aspects of life. Cultural dimensions thereby not only display cultural differences between nations but also serve as a useful tool and orientation for interculturally active people, for example in the organizational and business environment (Layes, 2010).

One of the first researchers to come up with cultural dimensions as a result of his research was Edward Hall. He has found during his research that interaction in all cultures differs fundamentally in three dimensions: *Context*, *Space*, and *Time* (Hall, 1976; Hall and Hall, 1990; Hall, 1966). With regards to *Context*, Hall differentiates high-context from low-context communication cultures. In high-context cultures, the actual information of communication is transmitted to a large extent in the contextual, non-verbal, and physical context. In contrast, in low-context cultures, most information is conveyed clearly and explicitly and understood as such. The concept of *Space* is a result of Hall's proxemics

research and relates to the personal space of every human being. Hall argues that the personal distance a person holds from others is significantly influenced by the person's cultural background and therefore plays a considerable role in intercultural communication. Regarding the dimension of *Time*, Hall differentiates between polychronic and monochronic systems and understandings of time. People in monochronic cultures see time as linear, tend to accomplish things step by step, strictly stick to plans and communicate low-context. People in polychronic cultures, by contrast, tend to work on many things at the same time, regularly change plans and communicate high-context.

While Hall's cultural dimensions were developed from an anthropological perspective and qualitative approach, the cultural dimensions that followed over the years were largely based on large-scale quantitative studies. In particular, Schwartz's, Trompenaars's, and Hofstede's research studies as well as the GLOBE study by Javidan et al. should be mentioned here.

The social psychologist Shalom Schwartz developed a method, the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS), by which cross-cultural individual values can be determined and distinguished from each other. On the basis of this survey in today over 60 countries and their analysis, Schwartz identified seven universal and cultural value orientations that oppose each other in three bipolar cultural dimensions: *Embeddedness vs. (Intellectual or Affective) Autonomy*, *Mastery vs. Harmony*, and *Hierarchy vs. Egalitarianism* (Schwartz, 2006; Schwartz, 2012.)

Another important cultural dimension concept for the cross-cultural research field comes from the Dutch manager and consultant Fons Trompenaars. His model is based in part on existing theories from other researchers such as Hall or Hofstede and results from over 15,000 questionnaire respondents from 40 countries. Since in his study mainly managers were interviewed, Trompenaars' cultural dimensions model has a particular significance to the corporate and organizational context. According to his theory, people of different cultures distinguish themselves in three essential areas of life, namely in their relation to time, nature, and to other people. Based on this assumption, Trompenaars developed seven cultural dimensions. Of these, five dimensions describe how humans relate to each other, and one dimension respectively refers to the relation of humans to time and nature: *Universalism vs. Particularism*; *Communitarianism vs. Individualism*; *Neutral vs. Emotional*; *Diffuse vs. Specific*; *Achievement vs. Ascription*; *Sequential time vs. synchronous time*; *Internal direction vs. outer direction* (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997; Layes, 2010).

The GLOBE project was initiated in the early 1990s by Professor Robert J. House and his colleagues and gathered data from more than 17,000 managers in 62 countries. It is one of the more recent studies that yielded cultural dimensions based on value orientations. Based on its results, the researchers of the GLOBE study were able to define nine cultural dimensions, which are partly similar to already existing theories yet reconceptualized and

expanded on as indicated in the following: *Performance Orientation; Assertiveness; Future Orientation; Human Orientation; Institutional Collectivism; In-Group Collectivism; Gender Egalitarianism; Power Distance; Uncertainty Avoidance* (Javidan et al. 2006).

Since the scope of this thesis is limited, it is not possible to go further into the cultural dimensions of Schwartz, Trompenaars, and the GLOBE study.

Of the researchers mentioned, the Dutch psychologist Geert Hofstede and his cultural dimensions model, which focuses particularly on cultural differences between individual nations, has had the greatest influence in the cross-cultural research field until today. This is illustrated by the fact that his works had already been cited 54,000 times by June 2010, an until this day unattained number (Tung and Verbeke, 2010).

Hofstede first presented his cultural dimensions model in the 1970s. It was preceded by a comprehensive study with over 110,000 employees of the multinational company IBM and was conducted in more than 50 countries around the world. The aim of the study was to find out how values in society and the working environment are affected by culture (Layes, 2010). When analyzing the data, Hofstede found that there are universal problems in all countries, yet they are solved differently from one country to another. These identified areas were eventually termed cultural dimensions. The six cultural dimensions following Hofstede are *Power Distance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Masculinity vs. Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation, and Indulgence vs. Restrain* (Hofstede, 1991; Hofstede et al., 2010). A more detailed explanation of each of the dimensions is provided in section 3.2.

A model that is not necessarily listed as a classic cultural dimensions model in the literature in this research field but is relevant to this work because of its approach and potential application, is Erin Meyer's eight culture scales model. This model is comparatively new, builds strongly on the theories mentioned above, and helps to explain differences in communication styles across cultures. It compares cultures relatively based on eight scales – interpreted by the author of this thesis as equivalent to cultural dimensions – that relate to specific areas of intercultural communication in organizational and business settings. The concept of cultural relativity is particularly emphasized as it is a crucial factor to understand the purpose of Meyer's model. When people of one culture communicate or interact with those of another, their image of the other will always be created through their own perspective, that is, in comparison to their own culture. Concerning the eight scales, this means that "what matters is not the absolute position of either culture on the scale but rather the relative position of the two cultures [...] that determines how people view one another" (Meyer, 2016, p.22).

The eight scales, which are explained in more detail in 3.3, include the following areas: *Communicating, Leading, Deciding, Trusting, Disagreeing, Evaluating, Scheduling, and Persuading.*

### **2.2.2 Research on Cultural Standards**

The other main strand of literature and research in the cross-cultural field that is concerned with the determination of cultural differences is the concept of cultural standards. It was originally based on the theories of the two psychologists Piaget and Boesch, before being further elaborated and methodized by Thomas (Fink et al., 2005).

As described in 2.1, culture forms a meaning-giving orientation system on the basis of which people behave, evaluate situations, and perceive their environment. Thomas sees cultural standards as core elements at the center of the orientation system and defines them as “[...] forms of perception, thought patterns, judgment and interaction that are shared by a majority of the members of a specific culture who regard their behavior as normal, typical and binding” (Thomas, 2010, p.22). A person’s own actions and those of others are always perceived and judged on the basis of his or her cultural standards. For this reason, it is critical to highlight that the cultural standards of a particular country will differ depending on the perspective of another culturally distinct interacting group or individual (Thomas, 2010).

The research in this field has revealed that after people have socialized within a particular culture, they usually do not perceive their own cultural standards when interacting with each other. However, when interacting with people from other cultures that have different orientation systems, unusual situations will be faced that cannot be interpreted and evaluated correctly anymore. In the concept of cultural standards, such a situation is referred to as a critical incident and can, for example in relation to the organizational environment, lead to problems and misunderstandings in multicultural collaboration. Even if cultural standards do not describe the whole concept of culture, they can be useful in predicting certain collective behavioral patterns of culture and typical intercultural interactions within specific situations. In this way not only are difficulties or misunderstandings foreseen and prevented but solutions to problems may also be developed (Thomas, 1993, cited in Dunkel and Meierewert, 2004; Dunkel and Meierewert, 2004; Fink and Mayrhofer, 2009).

What has just been described confirms the argumentation of Fink et al. (2005) that cultural standards, in contrast to cultural dimensions, can anticipate actual problematic situations that may arise in the organizational and business environment. Moreover, cultural standards can be used to demonstrate how certain behaviors are perceived and responded to by culturally diverse individuals such as managers or employees.

### 3. CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON OF PORTUGAL AND GERMANY

#### 3.1 General Information and Historical Background

The culture of each country is shaped to a large extent by country-specific characteristics such as its geographical location or demography. However, the greatest influence in shaping a country's culture comes from history. In this regard, and to better understand cultural characteristics as well as differences in values or norms, both countries will be described and compared to each other more closely in the following sections.

As can be seen in Table 3.1, Portugal and Germany differ greatly from each other in their geographical location, territorial and population size, economic situation, and political system.

	<b>Portugal</b>	<b>Germany</b>
<b>Geographical location</b>	South-West Europe	North-Central Europe
<b>Size of state territory</b>	92,212 km <sup>2</sup>	357,588 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population size</b>	10,4 million inhabitants	83,2 million inhabitants
<b>Gross domestic product (GDP)</b>	200 billion €	3368 billion €
<b>GDP per capita</b>	19,430 €	40,494 €
<b>Import / Export</b>	77,3 billion € / 62,2 billion €	1110 billion € / 1330 billion €
<b>Political system</b>	Semi-presidential republic President: Marcelo Rebelo de Souza Prime minister: António Costa	Parliamentary democracy Federal President: Walter Steinmeier Federal chancellor: Olaf Scholz

Table 3.1 – Country comparison between Portugal and Germany<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Countryeconomy, 2022; Portal Diplomatico, 2022; Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2022; European Union 2022; Britannica, 2022; destatis, 2022; statista, 2022; Auswärtiges Amt, 2022; OEC, 2022;



### 3.1.1 Historical Background of Portugal

The fact that Portugal was founded as a state in 1143, after being recognized as an independent kingdom, makes it one of the oldest nations in the world. After the conquest of other territories that are now part of Portuguese territory, such as the Algarve, and the construction of important infrastructure such as universities, palaces, or cathedrals in the 12th and 13th centuries, the most glorious era in Portuguese history began: the Age of Discoveries (Portal Diplomatico, 2022).

Throughout the 14th, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 16th centuries, Portuguese sailors and colonists discovered previously unexplored territories and sea routes to Africa, Asia, or South America and colonized Brazil, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Macau in China, or Goa in India among others. These conquests eventually helped Portugal to great wealth and made it the largest empire on the globe at that time. However, after the devastating earthquake that almost completely destroyed the Portuguese capital Lisbon in 1755, Napoleon's invasion, and Brazil's independence in the year 1822, Portugal lost its status as a rich global empire (Portugal.com, 2021; Scroope, 2018).

After years of civil war, instability, and the end of the kingdom through a revolution in 1908, Portugal has officially declared a republic in 1910. However, the republic did not last long and was replaced in 1926 after a military coup by the fascist authoritarian regime Estado Novo under the leadership of António de Oliveira Salazar. Salazar's regime suppressed political opposition, isolated Portugal, and held onto its colonies longer than any other country in Europe.

The Estado Novo remained for almost half a century until the Carnation Revolution on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1974, which was then followed by the independence of every remaining Portuguese colony, democratic reforms, and free elections (Portal Diplomatico, 2022; Portugal.com, 2021).

In the following years, Portugal increasingly opened up to Europe and eventually joined the European Union in 1986, which brought an economic boost to the country. At this time, democracy in Portugal consolidated and a multi-party system emerged. In addition, infrastructure, health, education, and welfare improved. In spite of the economic growth, Portugal had to struggle with socio-economic problems and high unemployment rates. The global economic crisis and its aftermath hit Portugal particularly hard between 2009 and 2012, with unemployment rates as high as 15%, but Portugal finally emerged from the recession in 2014. From then on, the economy stabilized and has been driven since by the strong tourism sector (Britannica, 2022). The dependence on the tourism sector was particularly noticeable during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and the accompanying travel bans and lockdowns, as the economy contracted by almost 8.5% (OECD<sup>1</sup>, 2022).

### 3.1.2 Historical Background of Germany

Like Portugal, today's Germany was also decisively shaped by certain historical events. Unlike Portugal, however, it took longer for the idea of a common, united German nation to emerge. After the 30 Years' War and the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the so-called Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation was divided into many politically and partly sovereign principalities (deutschland.de, 2022).

It was not until 1871 that the numerous German-speaking principalities, kingdoms, and duchies were united. As a result, the German Empire, a constitutional monarchy, was established at Versailles during the Franco-Prussian War (Britannica, 2022).

In 1914, the German Empire played a decisive role in triggering the First World War, which lasted until 1918 and from which Germany emerged as a defeated nation. In the aftermath of the war, the so-called Weimar Republic was founded. However, the republic only lasted until 1933, when Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi party NSDAP, was appointed Chancellor and subsequently seized total power. The following so-called Third Reich, the Nazi dictatorship, and the associated persecution and murder of minorities in Europe, especially the Jewish, ended with the end of the Second World War (1939-1945) (deutschland.de, 2022).

Germany was then divided and administered by the victorious forces of the USA, France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union into four zones, from which two sovereign states eventually emerged. In 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany (BRD), known as West Germany, was founded on the occupied territory of the USA, France, and Great Britain. Three years later the BRD was one of the founder states of the European Coal and Steel Community (today the European Union). In the east of Germany and under the influence of the communist Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic (DDR) was also formed in 1949. The two states were separated for more than 40 years, developed under opposite doctrines, and were only reunited with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the reunification on October 3rd, 1990 (Britannica, 2022).

After reunification, the former communist East struggled with economic problems, and high unemployment rates and strongly relied on subsidies from the federal government. Even though Germany was considered one of the key players in security and prosperity in Europe ever since the introduction of the European Community, there was a need for action in domestic policy. After the respective governments in the 1990s and early 2000s failed to control the relatively high unemployment rate, Angela Merkel became the first woman to be elected Chancellor in 2005. Her four terms in office were marked by economic stability but also by challenges to be overcome, such as the period of the Euro-debt crisis and the refugee crisis in 2015 during which more than 1 million refugees came to Germany (Britannica, 2022).

Germany has an export surplus, as shown in Table 3.1, and is thus partly dependent on the prosperity and purchasing power of other countries. Mainly, for this reason, the economy has also declined by a remarkable 5.5 % due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis (OECD<sup>2</sup>,2022).

### 3.2 Portugal and Germany in Hofstede’s Cultural Dimension Model

In the following, each of the six cultural dimensions will be briefly explained. Subsequently, a cross-cultural comparison between Germany and Portugal is conducted based on their scores in the respective cultural dimensions. In this context, the social character of both cultures and its implications for the organizational environment is further analyzed.

Figure 3.1 shows the respective index scores of Portugal and Germany in the six cultural dimensions according to Hofstede. The index scores for every country Hofstede studied in his research can be found in the appendix. Each country is represented by a score, high (100) to low (0), in the respective dimensions. Hofstede pointed out that the scores are to be considered relative, as the individual characteristics of each human being may be to some extent contrary to the orientation of the respective country in the model (Hofstede Insights, 2022).

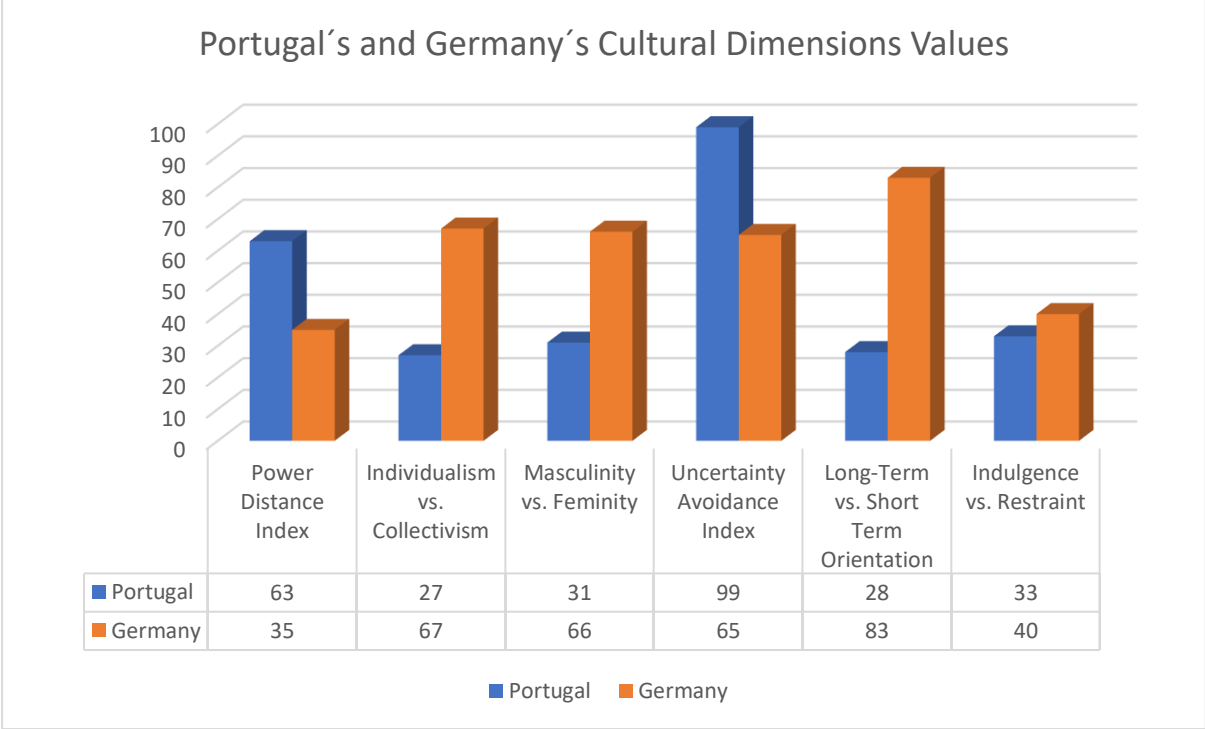


Figure 3.1 – Portugal and Germany in Hofstede’s cultural dimensions model<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Data taken from Hofstede Insights, 2022

It has to be mentioned that Hofstede's cultural dimensions describe national cultures and their societal characteristics by using value-based categories and are not able to predict the behavior of two culturally different individuals in specific situations. As cultures are solely mapped per scores within Hofstede's dimensions, a relative comparison, that is, comparing one culture from the subjective perspective of another culture, is rather unfeasible. However, since Hofstede's model allows a more detailed comparison between Portuguese and German culture than other cultural dimension models, it was used for a cross-cultural comparison.

### **Power Distance Index (PDI)**

The PDI expresses the degree to which less powerful individuals within society and therefore in institutions such as families, schools or the workplace not only accept but also expect that the distribution of power is rather unequal. Members of societies with a high PDI tend to accept hierarchical systems in which everyone has a clearly defined position, and which doesn't have to be further justified. In contrast, members of societies with a low PDI seek an equalization of power and request justification for unequally distributed power (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede Insights, 2022).

In this dimension, Germany is listed with a relatively low score of 35 while Portugal has a comparably high score of 63. Taking Hofstede's description of this dimension into account, this means that less powerful people in Portuguese society, institutions, or organizations are more likely to tolerate and even expect that power is shared unequally than would be the case in Germany.

For the organizational and business environment, this would mean that hierarchical structures are prevailing, and unequal distribution of power is rather accepted in the working place in Portugal. It also implies an expectation from both sides, management as well as subordinates, that superiors have considerably more rights of determination and lead and control the workers. According to Hofstede's theory, subordinates in Portugal tend to expect to be guided on their tasks and act on instructions. In Germany, on the other hand, superiors and subordinates would interact on a more equal level. Hierarchies within an organization are not as top-down as in Portugal and superiors would not be expected to control subordinates regularly. Instead of being told how to work and to deal with tasks subordinates in low PDI cultures like Germany would rather wish to be asked for their opinion (Hofstede et al., 2010).

### **Individualism vs. Collectivism**

This cultural dimension is determined by the extent to which members of a society are organized into social groups. In individualistic societies, loose social connections between

their members tend to be preferred. In this context, every individual is expected to be concerned mainly with his or her well-being and that of his or her close family. In collectivist societies, on the other hand, close social networks - often comprising the entire family - are maintained in which mutual loyalty, help, and support are crucial (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede Insights, 2022).

While Germany, with a score of 67, is considered a rather individualistic culture, Portugal, with a score of 27, is the opposite and is regarded by Hofstede as a collectivist culture. In collectivist societies such as Portugal, there tends to be a very pronounced understanding of group belonging, which is based primarily on moral values such as loyalty. As groups provide emotional stability and security to individuals, this means that relationships within groups such as the close but also extended family or circle of friends are kept close and long-term. In Germany, in contrast, members of the society tend to see their personal interests as more important than those of a group. The reason for this is that there rarely are close intertwined relationships with the (extended) family in the first place. Children in individualist societies such as Germany would mostly be educated to be independent to no longer be emotionally as well as physically dependent on the family when grown up. As a consequence, the sense of group belonging is far less pronounced in Germany than in Portugal according to Hofstede (2011).

For Portugal and with regards to the organizational environment this would mean that relationships between superiors and subordinates are based on moral conditions, similar to family relations, and management means managing the collective. Another characteristic of the organizational and business environment influenced by a collectivist culture is that personal relationships are generally considered at least as important as the job itself and need to be established in order to work or do business successfully with each other. In Germany, however, relationships between employees and employers are regulated in terms of obligation and accountability, and management means managing the individual. Opposed to Portugal, in an individualist culture such as Germany working or doing business together is not necessarily supposed to require any personal relationship between the different parties (Hofstede, 2022; Hofstede, 2011).

### **Masculinity vs. Femininity**

This dimension revolves around the distribution of values between genders within a society. If a culture tends to be masculine, the values of women and men differ strongly. In feminine cultures, by contrast, the values of the genders tend to be more similar (Hofstede, 2011). In masculine societies, competition, achievement, assertiveness, or heroism are preferred. Feminine societies rather exhibit cooperation, humility, and a preference for quality of living, while the will for consensus prevails (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede Insights, 2022).

Since Germany has a score of 66, it is regarded as a rather masculine culture. Portugal, by contrast, is a more feminine culture with a score of 31. This means that in Portugal the roles of gender in terms of emotionality are rather overlapping than distinct from each other. Women but also men are supposed to be humble and caring. Moreover, in feminine societies such as Portugal, a consensus instead of open confrontation is preferred while extreme competition or polarization is comparatively less appreciated. In Germany, in comparison, roles of gender regarding emotionality are more distinct, meaning that men are rather expected to be assertive and strive for success, while women take the counterpart and are assumed to be more caring and modest. In Germany, compared to Portugal and according to Hofstede's model, it is typical that people identify with their work and that status is expressed more openly through material things (Hofstede, 2022; Hofstede, 2011).

For the organizational context in Portugal, this would have the consequence that management takes a more intuitive approach, is primarily concerned with the well-being of its employees, and usually strives to resolve confrontations through compromise and negotiation. Based on Hofstede's assumption that members of feminist societies are more concerned with the quality of their lives, he concluded that people in such societies work to live their lives. In contrast, people in Germany would live to work. This assumption corresponds to the previously mentioned attributes such as assertiveness, determination, or the pursuit of competition and success. These characteristics are also considered typical for the organizational environment and management approach in masculine cultures such as Germany (Hofstede, 2011).

### **Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)**

The UAI reflects the grade to which members of a specific culture are able to cope with unstructured and uncertain situations in the future. Societies with a high UAI feel uncomfortable with unstructured and uncertain situations, maintain deeply rooted behavioral principles, and codes, and are rather intolerant as well as sceptical of novel ideas or structures. On the contrary, people in countries with a low UAI exhibit a rather flexible attitude, are more open to the unknown, and value practice over principles (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede Insights, 2022).

While Germany has a score of 66 and thus tends to avoid uncertainty, Portugal has a very high score of 99 and is considered one of the cultures with the greatest tendency to uncertainty avoidance. According to Hofstede, this means that Portuguese society has a strong necessity for unwritten as well as written laws and rules. Unstructured and unfamiliar situations trigger stress and anxiety in people, which is why they are generally avoided. For this reason, traditional behaviors and views are strictly adhered to, and new, unconventional ideas or practices are met with suspicion. These assumptions also apply to Germany due to

its relatively high UAI, yet they are not as pronounced compared to Portugal (Hofstede, 2022; Hofstede, 2011).

In the working environment, the high UAI in Portugal is expressed by an internal emotional necessity for regulations and rules and by the motivation to work hard for job security. In Germany, on the other hand, there is a similar emotional tendency with respect to the points just mentioned. Virtues such as formalization, precision, or punctuality represent the desired norm in both cultures (Hofstede, 2011).

### **Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation**

The fifth dimension was added to the model later than the four previously mentioned, following another study by Hofstede. It measures the extent to which societies prioritize and address the preservation of certain traditional habits or the management of present or future challenges. Societies with short-term orientation are attached to the preservation of traditional customs, values, and norms and are sceptical about societal change. Societies with long-term orientation are open to future changes that may be necessary and therefore pursue a rather pragmatic approach (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede Insights, 2022).

In this dimension, both cultures are again very different from each other. With a score of 83, Germany shows a high long-term orientation, while Portugal is the opposite with a low score of 28. This suggests that in Portuguese society normative thinking takes precedence over pragmatic thinking. With regard to the future and according to Hofstede, people tend not to invest or save but concentrate on achieving quick outcomes. Germany, on the other hand, is supposed to be a very pragmatic culture in which traditions can change depending on the situation. People strongly tend to invest, save money, and show persistence in achieving long-term outcomes (Hofstede Insights, 2022).

For the organizational environment, this implies that in Portugal short-term results tend to be attributed importance and, accordingly, short-term planning and actions are taken. In the working environment in Germany, in contrast, people tend to plan and invest with foresight and focus on long-term results.

### **Indulgence vs. Restraint**

The sixth and most recent dimension was also added to the model as a result of further studies. In societies that tend towards the indulgence side, relatively free satisfaction of basic and innate human needs associated with the enjoyment of life and fun is appreciated. In societies that tend towards restraint, the satisfaction of desires is controlled and regulated by stern social norms (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede Insights, 2022).

In the last dimension, Germany and Portugal are relatively similar, with scores of 40 and 33 respectively. Accordingly, both are cultures in which restraint prevails. Such societies

tend to be pessimistic, and cynic, and people hold back the satisfaction of their needs as they feel their behaviors are restricted by social norms (Hofstede Insights, 2022).

### 3.3 Portugal and Germany in Meyer’s eight culture scales model

In addition to the cross-cultural comparison with Hofstede’s cultural dimensions model, both countries are now contrasted on Erin Meyer’s eight culture scales model. Figure 3.2 shows the positions of Germany (DE) and Portugal (PT) on the respective scales. Below, each scale will be shortly defined before comparing both cultures on the basis of their relative position to each other (find visualized scales with further countries studied in the appendix).

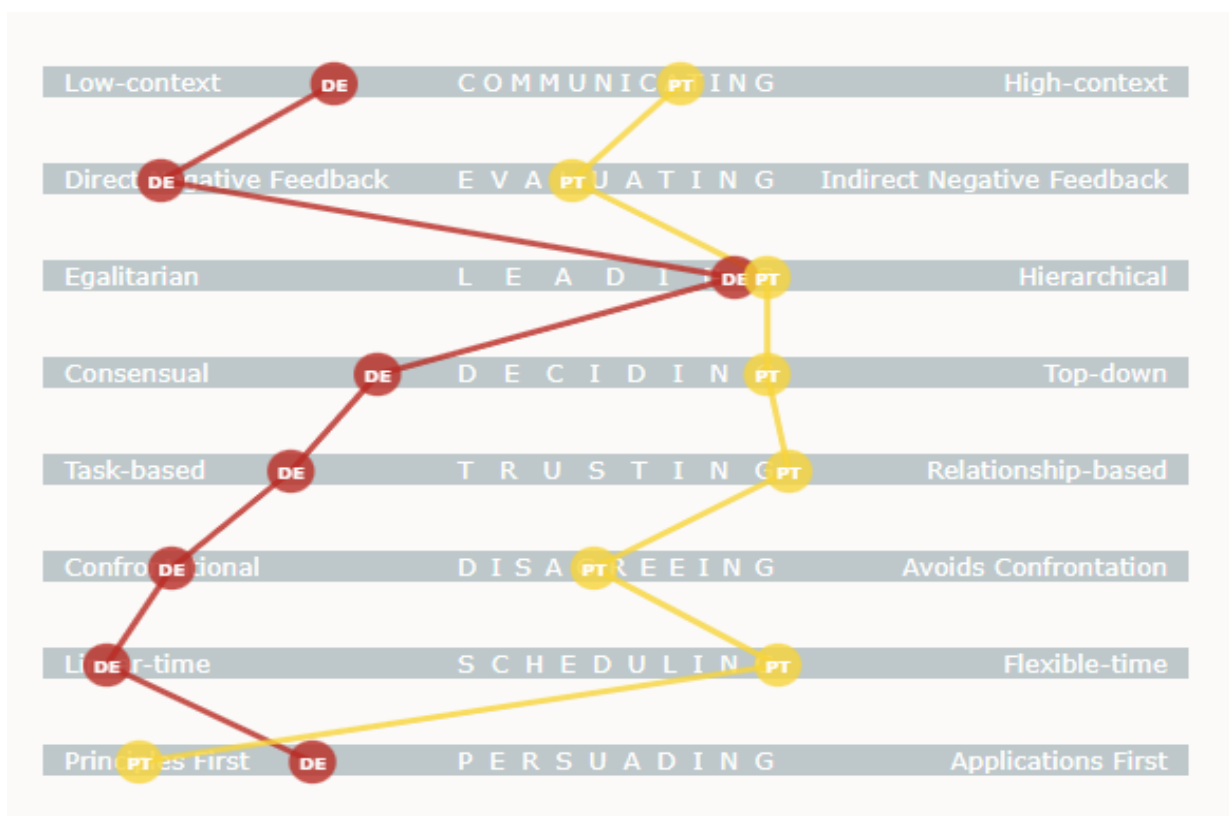


Figure 3.2 – Germany and Portugal on Meyer’s eight culture scales<sup>7</sup>

#### Communicating: low-context vs. high-context

For the Communicating scale, Meyer adopted Hall’s previously mentioned key factor *Context* and elaborated on it. As already explained in 2.2., low-context communication stands for a clear expression of what is thought and intended. High-context communication is transmitted in layers and is therefore considerably more sophisticated and complex. Often, what is

<sup>7</sup> Erin Meyer, 2022



meant is not directly pronounced and rather transmitted and understood between the lines (Meyer, 2016).

Following Meyer, Germany is supposed to be a low-context culture where thoughts and intentions are clearly communicated. Portugal, by contrast, is pictured as a comparatively high-context culture. Here, communication should be more complex than in Germany, and messages are often transmitted as part of the context without being directly expressed.

### **Evaluating: direct negative feedback vs. indirect negative feedback**

According to Meyer, feedback is communicated entirely differently in various parts of the world. For this reason, there can be considerable misunderstandings in intercultural communication in the organizational environment. Towards the left end of the Evaluating scale, negative feedback to colleagues tends to be communicated directly and honestly. It is also rather normal to openly criticize a person in the presence of others. Towards the right end of the scale, negative feedback tends to be communicated more subtly nuanced, and diplomatically. Criticism in the presence of others is undesirable to unimaginable depending on the position of the respective country on the scale (Meyer, 2016).

Following the Evaluating scale, in Germany, negative feedback is usually communicated directly and unembellished. In Portugal, however, negative feedback is supposed to be given comparatively less straightforwardly.

### **Leading: egalitarian vs. hierarchical**

Meyer bases the Leading scale on Hofstede's PDI dimension and applies it explicitly to the organizational and business context. In cultures in which an egalitarian leading style prevails, the distance between superiors and subordinates is relatively low. In addition, flat corporate structures and communication that can bypass direct superiors are considered normal. In contrast, in cultures located towards the side of hierarchical leading, a high distance between superiors and subordinates is desired and accepted. Here, the structure of organizations is usually clearly layered, so communication goes top-down, without skipping superiors (Meyer, 2016).

Although Meyer bases this scale on Hofstede's PDI dimension, the two models assess Germany, in particular, differently. While Germany is depicted as a culture with a lower PDI in Hofstede's model, it occupies roughly the same position as Portugal in Meyer's model. Therefore, Meyer attributes a rather hierarchical leadership style to both countries.

### **Deciding: consensual vs. top-down**

On the Deciding scale, a distinction is made between consensual and top-down decision-making. While cultures on the consensual side of the scale tend to make decisions

unanimously and as a group, cultures on the top-down side tend to have decisions taken by individuals, in most cases by the manager (Meyer, 2016).

When it comes to decision-making in the organizational and business environment, Meyer suggests that a predominantly consensual approach is taken in Germany. In Portugal, by relative comparison, final decisions tend to be made by individuals at a higher level.

### **Trusting: task-based vs. relationship-based**

The Trusting scale is about how trust is built in the organizational and business context. Cultures that tend toward task-oriented trust build confidence in colleagues through the context of work-related activities. Continuous good and reliable work lead to a trusting working relationship. The opposite is the case in cultures that tend towards the relationship-based trusting side. Here, trust is created through activities away from the business environment, such as eating and drinking together. While it takes longer to build sustainable trust, it lasts longer afterward and serves as a basis for future cooperation (Meyer, 2016).

Meyer's model implies that Germany is a culture in which trust in the workplace and business is built primarily on job-related tasks, while Portuguese culture is rather the opposite in relative terms. Here, trust is assumed to be built more through personal connections outside of the organizational environment.

### **Disagreeing: confrontational vs. avoids confrontation**

The Disagreeing scale shows how different cultures deal with disagreement. There are cultures that are more confrontational when disagreeing and those in which confrontation is avoided. In confrontational cultures, open discussions and disagreement are seen as something positive for cooperation in a team or a company and do not have a negative impact on relationships in the workplace. In cultures that rather avoid confrontation, open argumentation is seen as detrimental to an organizational or business environment and will affect relationships in a negative way (Meyer, 2016).

Germany's position on this scale suggests that in case of disagreement on a topic, a process, or a task, a discussion tends to be open and confrontational. In Portugal, on the other hand, disagreements are supposed to be dealt with in a comparatively less confrontational way, as such might have a lasting negative impact on personal relationships.

### **Scheduling: linear-time vs. flexible-time**

Meyer bases the Scheduling scale on Hall's concept of *Time* described in 2.2.1, which ascribes either monochronic or polychronic time understanding to cultures. People in cultures that are rather located on the linear-time (monochronic) side of the scale tend to stick to agreed schedules and carry them out step by step. Good organization and structure are expected and appreciated. Cultures on the flexible-time (polychronic) side, on the other

hand, take a much more flexible and adaptable approach. Here, several things can be worked on at the same time and the order of tasks or priorities can be changed or interrupted as needed (Meyer, 2016).

On this scale, the relative difference between the two cultures is most striking. Germany is suggested to be a highly monochronic culture where schedules have to be followed and worked through step by step and organization is paramount. Portugal, by relative comparison, is pictured as a rather polychronic culture. In the organizational and business environment, flexibility, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances are seen as important, whereby several tasks can be completed at the same time.

### **Persuading: principles-first vs. applications-first**

The Persuading scale is about the element of persuasion in the organizational and business environment. Here, Meyer distinguishes between countries that have an applications-first or principles-first approach. Cultures that tend to take a principles-first approach work on a theory first before reaching a conclusion or presenting facts. In applications-first cultures, the priority is to quickly establish or position facts and opinions and then, if necessary, present a concept that supports the approach (Meyer, 2016).

In terms of persuading in the organizational and business environment, both cultures are relatively similar. In Germany as well as in Portugal the first step of a task or project is to work on a theoretical framework that supports the argumentation or presentation.

## **4. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

### **4.1 The Cultural Standards Method**

To generate valid, specific, and practicable knowledge about critical incidents that arise in intercultural interactions in particular contextual situations and to identify typical behavioral patterns of one culture from the perspective of another culture, Alexander Thomas developed the so-called Cultural Standards Method.

As already explained in chapter 2.2, there are various approaches in the field of cross-cultural and intercultural research to determine cultural differences between distinct cultures. However, in comparison to cultural dimension models, Thomas' Cultural Standards Method is able to deliver deep insights into the individually perceived and experienced cultural differences between people of two different cultures. It can therefore provide a more detailed picture of the cultural impact on specific situations in the organizational environment.

Something critical to emphasize in the context of the Cultural Standards Method is the relativity of cultural differences. For this reason, the identification of cultural standards of a particular culture is not universally valid and depends entirely on the perspective of the other, second interacting culture (Brueck and Kainzbauer, 2002).

The definition of cultural standards according to Thomas was already given in 2.2.2. What must not be ignored, however, is that within identified cultural standards there may be variations in individual behavior. This means that a cultural standard does not necessarily imply that all members of a culture behave as the standard suggests from the perspective of another culture. Nevertheless, a unanimously identified cultural standard most likely represents the behavior of the majority of members of a particular culture in certain situations and can therefore be determined as such for research purposes. To be able to determine cultural standards at all, it is necessary to focus on analyzing critical incidents that were already defined in 2.2.2. Additionally, it should be noted, that critical incidents are not necessarily to be understood in a negative way but rather refer to something unfamiliar and difficult to comprehend from one's own cultural perspective. Therefore, positive perceived, unforeseen experiences are also to be regarded as critical incidents and need to be involved in the identification of cultural standards (Brueck and Kainzbauer, 2002).

### **4.2 Research Methodology**

In order to identify critical incidents, which is the main goal of the Culture Standard Method, people from one culture are interviewed who regularly interact or have interacted with people from another culture. The interview partners are asked to describe their perceptions of certain experiences or situations with their culturally different counterparts in a particular

setting (Fink et al., 2005). In this specific case, Germans were interviewed and asked to report on their experiences with Portuguese people in the organizational environment in Portugal.

In the course of the interviews, situations will most likely emerge that can be described as critical incidents. During the evaluation of all interviews conducted, the critical incidents that occur most frequently are filtered out, summarized, and categorized in so-called preliminary cultural standards. To ultimately validate these preliminarily defined cultural standards, it is necessary to consult with the interviewees following the analysis of the interviews. This process will help to determine whether the cultural standards are largely confirmed by the interviewees or whether certain standards simply represented individual perceptions and must be removed from the study as a non-valid result (Fink et al., 2005; Brueck and Kainzbauer, 2002; Dunkel and Meierewert, 2004). The process shown graphically below in Figure 4.1 illustrates the individual steps of the Cultural Standards Method.

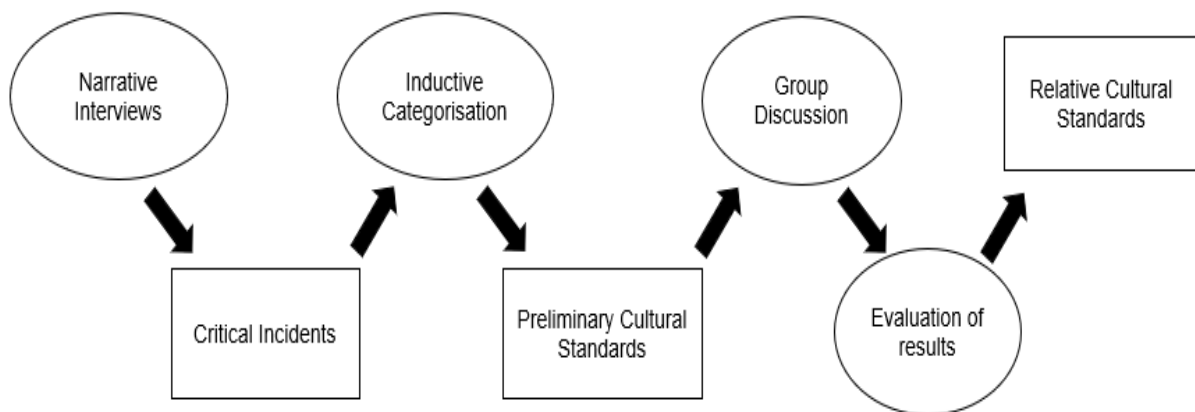


Figure 4.1 - Process of the Cultural Standards Method<sup>8</sup>

#### 4.2.1 Conducting a Narrative Interview

The basic idea of the narrative interview is described by Fritz Schütze (1976) as the possibility to let the listener participate directly in first-hand experiences shared by the narrator and thereby gain deep insight into the told stories. In this context, both the narrator and the listener have the advantage of being flexible in their storytelling or their expression of interest in certain topics. In the course of the narration, for example, new memories can arise for the narrator and the listener can provide impulses for further reflection as well.

<sup>8</sup> cf. Brueck and Kainzbauer, 2002, p.8

Furthermore, the narrative interview conducted as part of the Cultural Standards Method may ensure an unrestricted and free flow of information and data on the part of the narrator. From this, the critical incidents relevant to answering the research question can then be filtered out. In particular, the narrative interview helps to gain new information and data for previously insufficiently researched scientific questions and to acquire new knowledge about certain research areas (Fink et al., 2005).

However, for the researcher to receive detailed, relevant, and viable results for the study, the interview must be thoughtfully structured. Brueck and Kainzbauer (2002) describe the phases of the narrative interview for the Cultural Standards Method, referring to Lamnek (1995), as follows:

**Explanatory Phase:**

In the first phase, briefly before the actual interview, the aim is to create a comfortable environment for the interviewee. This increases the likelihood that the interviewee will provide a more detailed narration of his or her stories.

**Introductory Phase:**

In the second phase, the interviewee is informed about the broad framework of the research study and the intention of the interview. By giving only a broad description, it is ensured that the narrator is unbiased in telling her or his stories.

**Narrative Phase:**

In the third and main phase of the interview, the interviewee reports on his or her experiences. The interviewer should only listen attentively and not interrupt at any time. It is important to mention that it should be left to the narrators themselves to decide what they report.

**Investigative Phase:**

After the respondent's narrative, the interviewer may try to obtain additional information relevant to the research. It is essential that the narrative nature of the interview is maintained. For this reason, the interviewer tries to encourage the interviewee to continue or deepen his or her stories instead of asking specifically for new content.

**Assessment Phase:**

In the last stage, the narrative phase is completed, and it is no longer possible to return to it. Now both the interviewer and the respondent should reflect, evaluate, and interpret what has been reported.

#### **4.2.2 Identifying Cultural Standards through Inductive Categorisation and Feedback**

The narrative interviews, which are both recorded and transcribed, generate many short stories about specific situations from which critical incidents can be extracted. Subsequently, to be able to work out typical behavioral characteristics and thus preliminary cultural standards, the stories told have to be examined in more detail (Brueck and Kainzbauer, 2002).

The data material resulting from the interviews is analyzed with a qualitative content analysis for repetitive critical incidents, or incidents that are related to them and seem to be culturally conditioned. Computer software can be used as a tool for qualitative content analysis (Fink et al., 2005). The analysis of the conducted interviews in the context of this thesis was carried out using the qualitative data analysis program MaxQda.

For the content analysis, the approach of inductive category formation according to Mayring (2000) is used. Here, the category formation orients itself at systematic reduction processes. In contrast to deductive category formation, inductive category formation creates new categories from the text material instead of applying previously determined categories to the text that has to be analyzed.

The critical incidents are then analyzed and interpreted, with similar incidents grouped in a respective category - a preliminary cultural standard. However, the elaborated categories must be sufficiently different from each other in their definition (Fink et al., 2005).

As mentioned above, the determination of the preliminary cultural standards is followed by feedback interviews with the respondents. The intention is to remove such critical incidents that are only based on specific personal experiences or interests and are not due to typical cultural differences. Hence, only those preliminary cultural standards that are confirmed by the majority of respondents are identified as the final, relative cultural standards (Brueck and Kainzbauer, 2002; Fink et al., 2005).

Here, it is necessary to speak of relative and not general cultural standards. As Thomas (2010) explains, these cultural standards are not representative of an entire culture, in this case the Portuguese, but solely emerge from the perspective of members of another culture, in this case the German. Nonetheless, the cultural standards identified are helpful in predicting typical intercultural interactions and in understanding and interpreting certain behavior between these two cultures.

## **5. RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH STUDY**

### **5.1 Research Details**

#### **Sample Overview**

To obtain valid results and to answer the research question, the sample had to consist of German citizens who live or have lived in Portugal for a certain period of time and who work or have worked with Portuguese. This period was set by the author to be at least one year. Even though the composition of the sample was intended to include mainly people from higher positions such as directors or team leaders with extensive professional experience, less experienced professionals were also included in order to get a different perspective.

To avoid the study being influenced by profession-specific subcultural characteristics, professionals from a wide range of sectors and industries, such as the consumer goods industry, the natural stone industry, the agricultural industry, the finance sector, the real estate sector, or the research sector, are included. In addition, a comparatively balanced gender ratio, as well as age structure, were ensured when creating the sample. The average age of the interviewees is 49 years while the average time they work or have worked in Portugal is 13 years. From a total of 10 interviewees, 4 are women and 6 are men.

Below, in Table 5.1 a sample overview is given. While the table includes indicators such as age, sex, profession, industry/sector, and the time worked in Portugal, the participants are de-identified and will be referred to by their identification number when presenting the results of the study.

#### **Realisation of the interviews**

The 10 interviews were conducted between the end of March 2022 and the end of April 2022. Prior to the interviews, each participant received an e-mail on the topic and objective of the thesis and the interview. In addition, all participants received a consent form, which they signed, thereby agreeing to participate and to the recording and processing of the data shared during the interviews. The interviews, which were all held in German and took between 35 and 40 minutes on average, were mostly conducted via a video telephony platform. Only two interviews were conducted in person.



<b>Interviewee ID/No.</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Years worked/lived in Portugal</b>	<b>Professional title</b>	<b>Industry/Sector</b>
1	Male	56	18	Sales & Marketing Director	Consumer Goods
2	Male	56	30	Managing Director	Natural Stone
3	Female	57	5	Risk & Internal Control Officer	Infrastructure & Mobility
4	Female	25	2	Research Associate	(Social) Research
5	Female	54	3	Head of Projects	Infrastructure & Mobility
6	Male	27	3	Research Associate	(Laboratory) Research
7	Male	47	10	Head of Acquisition	Real Estate
8	Male	58	8	Finance Operations Director	Finance
9	Male	56	33	Managing Director	Agriculture
10	Female	57	21	Director of Operations	Natural Stone

Table 5.1 – Sample overview

## 5.2 Portuguese Cultural Standards from the German Perspective

This part of the thesis presents the seven Portuguese cultural standards that were identified after analyzing the interviews.

The following Portuguese cultural standards were identified:

1. Strong Understanding of Hierarchy
2. Emotionality and Sensitivity
3. Indirectness
4. Inefficiency in Communication and Decision-making
5. Irregular Flow of Time
6. Flexible, Short-term Planning and Improvisation
7. Significance of Interpersonal Relations

Many of the interviewees worked with Portuguese colleagues of all ages and also partly remarked during the interviews that the younger generation could no longer be entirely compared to the older generation. Nevertheless, and as described in 2.1.1, deeply layered cultural behavioral patterns are assumed to only change very slowly for which reason the behavior of the older and younger generation should not be diverging to an extent that would make the study invalid. In addition, it should also be mentioned that some of the interviewees had worked in or managed multinational teams in German companies in Portugal, but mainly worked with Portuguese colleagues. As mentioned in 2.1.2, corporate culture can have an impact on employees but is less influential than national culture. For this reason, the study ultimately generated significantly noticeable cultural differences in the organizational environment between Germans and Portuguese.

Before presenting the results, it is important to mention that the cultural standards that were identified based on this study are the result of narratives and perceptions of Germans in relation to the work context and are therefore only valid from a German perspective and when working with Portuguese. The cultural standards are not meant to imply that all Portuguese nationals in the organizational setting would always act or behave as presented below. Rather, they are intended to reflect a general tendency toward certain behaviors.

Another crucial point when presenting the results is to compare the two cultures from a neutral perspective. The cultural standards identified in this study are in no way intended to present a negative image of Portuguese culture and the Portuguese work environment or to

portray German culture and practices in the work environment as something comparatively better.

### **5.2.1 Strong Understanding of Hierarchy**

In the cultural dimension of Power Distance Index, which has already been described in the context of Hofstede's cultural dimensions model in 3.2, Germany scores comparatively low with a value of 35. With 65, Portugal has a comparably high value in the PDI. As already mentioned, this dimension refers to how people in a particular culture deal with the distribution of power. In the organizational environment, cultural differences from a German perspective were particularly evident, as each of the ten respondents reported on this in one way or another. The key finding is that the understanding of hierarchy and power imbalance between superiors and employees is perceived as stronger by Germans in the Portuguese working environment compared to their own culture.

Interviewee No. 5, for example, noted: *"The models of Portuguese, at least the ones I got to know, were quite hierarchical. They had very high levels of hierarchy, which my manager generation has actually tried to remove. Even in Germany, we didn't have as many hierarchical levels as in Portugal. So, in Portugal, the director was the director. You couldn't get to him, only through his assistant."* Interviewee No. 10 additionally emphasized the great distance she perceived between superiors and employees: *"I think in Germany, in a company, everyone is more equal at work and the bosses work more between colleagues. In Portugal, I perceived that there is a much greater distance between superiors and subordinates."*

The perceived strong hierarchical structure from the German perspective can be divided into three sub-points, which are described below.

#### ***Special position of the boss***

Even though it is self-explanatory as a sub-item within the topic of strong hierarchies, the special position of the boss needs to be explained in more detail, as eight of the respondents addressed it directly.

A unique feature of the director or the highest superior within an organization, which was mentioned several times during the interviews, is that they are often addressed differently than co-workers, sometimes by title. For Germans, this clear separation seems to be rather unusual and to represent an additional hurdle in cooperation, as was evident in some of the stories. In this regard, Interviewee No. 3 reported: *"Almost all of my Portuguese colleagues in the organization called each other by their first names. They are either on a rather informal first-name basis or address each other formally, but yet they all called each other by their*

*first names, except for the CEO. Nobody called him by his first name, he was always called 'Senhor Doutor'. And then I also learned relatively quickly that there is a certain code of conduct there as well when interacting with the boss."* Interviewee No. 1, who has already been working in Portugal for 18 years, still has difficulties with the titling of top superiors, as can be recognized in the following statement: *"What still irritates me a bit in my working life since I've been here is the titling. [...] When you address someone as a doctor. Some colleagues attach great importance to it. But it has nothing whatsoever to do with the title of doctor in Germany, it's purely hierarchical and purely a matter of respect. I'm the only one in our company who doesn't address the managing director as a doctor, because as a German I've taken the liberty of doing so. From my point of view, this is very much overrated because in Germany I know that even people with a Ph.D., that is, with a doctorate, attach importance to not being addressed as a doctor in the organization, in order not to precisely create this hurdle. This superior hurdle, I would say, this distance. I have experienced exactly the opposite here."* However, it must be mentioned, as emphasized by Interviewee No. 8, that the titling is rather demanded by older superiors: *"[...] It was much less with the younger ones. One was very quickly on a first-name basis and also much more relaxed. But with the older employees, the hierarchy was very pronounced."*

Another point raised by a large number of respondents is that the superior mostly has the first and last word. The general perception of the interviewees was that superiors start meetings, mainly lead discussions, give instructions, and distribute tasks. While Interviewee No. 7 noted that *"the typical Portuguese boss acts like the head of the family who gives instructions"*, Interviewee No. 4 reported an experience with her superior: *"She co-founded the company and really had sole authority. So, it was more like she was telling everyone on the team what to do and distributing tasks without really asking people for their opinions on the task. I knew that from Germany a little differently, a bit more participatory."* According to Interviewee No. 1, the special role of the superior in discourses and decision-making can also lead to problems: *"[...] It can lead to wrong or insufficiently prepared decisions because the dynamics of the discussion are too much led by or dependent on the hierarchically superior alone."*

### ***Lack of speak-up culture and sense of responsibility***

The fact that the superior has this special role and accordingly determines discourses or makes decisions alone is also due to the lack of a speak-up culture as well as a lacking sense of responsibility in the Portuguese working environment from the German perspective. Since they go hand in hand, they were subsumed under this cultural standard.

First, it addresses the speak-up culture, which respondents claimed was not very pronounced in the Portuguese organizational environment. In particular, the interviewees

reported that it was very difficult for subordinates to express ideas, to give feedback in general, or to openly address problems to their superiors. Interviewee No. 8 mentioned that in meetings with superiors, for example, there was no real, notable input from subordinates: *“So, if the boss didn't say how things should be going, then no one said on their own: ‘Now we'll do something, or: ‘It would be a good idea to do this and that’. It was more about finding out what the boss wants.”* Interviewee No. 3 was of the same opinion as she noted: *“[...] This is particularly noticeable in management meetings. When the management is present, nobody actually says anything that doesn't correspond to the opinion of the management. So very rarely...”*

In this regard, Interviewee No. 5 reported an incident in which she asked one of her subordinate colleagues to express his idea during a meeting in order to promote her subordinates to speak up and share their opinion: *“I have always tried to encourage them, and I have actually only succeeded by saying: ‘I can't say anything about it now, because I don't know anything about it.’ Portuguese are not used to the boss admitting that he doesn't know anything about a certain matter. The boss usually has to know everything, and has the final say. And when in doubt, I experienced that they let him or her, meaning the boss, say the wrong thing. So, there was this meeting, and there were, let's say, ten people. And in Portugal it's mainly the bosses who talk, the employees don't talk too much. So of course, I attracted a lot of attention, because if I didn't know something, I didn't invent anything. Then I said: ‘No, I can't answer that. But there's Pedro, (Name was changed) he knows better about this.’ Pedro was shocked and so were the others. I don't think it was typical for an employee to be asked by the boss to contribute something decisive to the topic.”*

However, there do seem to be ways to express an idea as a subordinate without having to step out of the shadow of the superior, as Interview No. 1 reported: *“I've experienced some curious things when it comes to new ideas and such. It goes as far as the colleague wrapping it up as if it was the other person's idea or the idea of someone higher up in the hierarchy. In fact, this has happened several times. I was a little surprised. But at the end of the day, it has indeed led to excellent results [...] because the other person, from whom the idea did not come, believed at the end of the day that he or she somehow contributed to the idea and if that was not the case, at least appreciated that one was involved.”*

One point that may contribute to the lack of speak-up culture is the lower sense of responsibility that many of the German interviewees perceived in comparison to their own culture. The basic tenor here is that people are rather unwilling to make decisions on their own and take personal or sole responsibility for their actions. Here, Interviewee No.1 stated: *“There is a technique that is practiced very often in Portugal in comparison to Germany, not only in professional life, in my experience. One tries to break responsibility down to several people. So, in the community or the group, it is easier to share responsibility.”* In this regard,

Interviewee No. 6 told a story about a meeting in which employees had to express their opinion and vote on a decision in front of their boss: *“We sat there, but nobody said anything about how we could do it better. And then the boss said that he'll write an e-mail and that the suggestions should be sent to him anonymously and he will then present the different models. Then we could vote for four proposals again anonymously. In the end, no one was responsible because it was chosen anonymously, but also no one suggested it personally because everything was anonymous.”*

The respondents see different reasons for this lack of sense of responsibility. On the one hand, this was explained by the interviewees due to the perceived hierarchical structures in Portuguese society and family, which are based on many rules and in which hierarchical lower members, such as children in families, do not have to take a lot of responsibilities. Interviewee No.7 stated: *“[In Portugal], in the family, where a hierarchical structure tends to prevail from my experience, children [...] have to be nice and lovely and in return, they don't have to take much responsibility. So, if something goes wrong, the children are certainly not blamed so much. And accordingly, in my opinion, they don't really develop that sense of responsibility and often don't get to experience that you can decide and do things yourself, but then you also have to bear the consequences yourself.”*

Interviewee No. 2 also sees reasons for the comparatively weak sense of responsibility to his culture as significant cultural difference that can be traced back to Portuguese parenting in families. He additionally mentioned the reason that Portuguese would be afraid of “losing face” if they do something wrong and are held solely responsible for it: *“As Germans, we say: Better to decide badly than not to decide at all. And Portuguese say: No, rather not decide, before deciding badly. I have to deal with this indecisiveness regularly and I think this has a deeper cultural background and is already rooted in the upbringing during childhood. But that can be a problem for us Germans. When you decide something, the situation of learning from something wrong is quite different here in Portugal than in Germany. So, in Germany you always take this positive touch and say you'll do better next time. I think that the Portuguese forget about this and have the feeling that they are losing face or is being counted on. And that is quite a big problem for the Portuguese. That's why they say: Better not decide then.”*

### **Limited autonomous working**

Another point that must be mentioned in relation to this cultural standard is the low level of autonomous work that many of the respondents referred to in some way. Portuguese employees would often rely on the instructions of their superiors and work best on something when they are specifically instructed to do so.

In this regard, Interviewee No. 8 said: *"The classic Portuguese hierarchical management style rather inhibits autonomous thinking and working."* It was often mentioned that without precise guidance and control of Portuguese employees, they did not really work independently on results. Interviewee No. 3 reported on this: *"Sometimes you have to be quite strict in order to achieve the results that I almost automatically expected of a team in Germany. So, if you as a manager in Germany have the right input and have confidence in your employees and then let them work, let's say, independently, then it actually works more or less by itself. And in my experience over the years, that is rather not the case in Portugal. You really have to define tasks precisely, go there again and check and maybe coach again. That was more exhausting for me than in Germany."*

Interviewee No. 5 confirms this perception and said that at first, in her opinion, her German management style did not really lead to the best results during the time she worked in Portugal: *"My style was to work independently and I'm not a good control freak either. So, the announcement was usually: 'Get in touch if you have questions, if you haven't understood something or if you have problems, if I can help somewhere or have to clarify something. Otherwise, I expect an interim report at some point and then the result at the end.' Unfortunately, that didn't work so well. It didn't work because I think there is a big difference, at least to me, and also to the German working culture. A Portuguese employee is not used to being so loosely controlled. So, I don't think my working style was that good for it."* However, she subsequently found a method that guaranteed better results: *"In the end, I realized that it is more promising to have very short but frequent meetings and to simply talk again and again. What they have done now, where they are and if there is anything to discuss."*

Even though the basic statement of the interviewees on this sub-theme was that autonomous working was less common, it was also emphasized that with guidance and encouragement to think autonomously and express thoughts and ideas, there will be input from employees as well as very efficient work and good results. Referring to this, Interviewee No. 8 reported on his past work experience in Portugal: *"I have also had some very good experiences as far as efficiency is concerned, especially when you demand it. If you tell people that they should make suggestions on their own, there is a lot of response. But they are not really used to that or were not used to it. Maybe that has changed today, but at least back then it was rather unusual for them."* Interviewee No. 9, who still runs a business in Portugal today, recommends on how the less pronounced autonomous working and proactiveness should be counteracted: *"If you want to get your Portuguese staff to be critical and to think along with you and to come up with ideas, then you have to get them to do that. You have to say: 'Guys, you are really doing a good job here. But maybe we can do it even better. Maybe you have an idea how we could do it even better, maybe this way or that way."*

*I would like to know how you see it.' We Germans tend to say very quickly: 'I want this and this in this time frame'. And so on. If that comes from a foreigner towards Portuguese, then the Portuguese usually do that, because they respect foreigners. But if you want to make them bring more than that, then you have to lead them to it, you have to push them to it. I can explain to Portuguese that we are under stress, that we need a decision and then it works really well. But if I don't do that, then it can be tough sometimes."*

### **5.2.2 Emotionality and Sensitivity**

In their stories, each of the 10 interviewees reported a more strongly pronounced emotionality and sensitivity compared to German culture, which was not only prevalent in the workplace but also Portuguese culture in general. Throughout the interviews it was emphasized in one way or another that it is of great importance to be able to respond to other people's feelings, to treat them with respect, and not to hurt anyone emotionally.

Interviewee No. 1 thinks that in general, in the organizational environment as well as daily life, there is a significant difference to German culture that has a considerable influence in the work context: *"In Portugal, from my experiences, everything is often very much related to group dynamics and social integration, so less to cognitive decisions or discourse as in Germany, but more to emotional perceptions and empathy."* He further explains the ability to perceive emotions and sensitivities and refers to the role of children in Portuguese society. Compared to Interviewee No.7, who expressed in the previous section that the way children are treated would later lead to a lack of sense of responsibility, Interviewee No.1 sees a positive and important aspect to it: *"Portuguese culture is very strongly oriented towards emotions, so, as a child one grows up with the ability to control emotions or better said, to perceive emotions. [...] This depends very much on my perception that children play a very big role in Portuguese society. There is no such thing that adults looking down on children or that when they make noise or something, it is somehow perceived negatively. Not at all. Children are heroes and are treated accordingly. And I have to say that Portuguese culture is miles ahead of German culture in this regard, in my opinion."*

This cultural standard was divided into two sub-items to better illustrate and understand the contributions and perceptions of the respondents, which are discussed in more detail below.

#### ***Pride, respect, and empathy***

As just mentioned above, pride, respect, and the ability to perceive other people's feelings play a decisive role in Portuguese culture according to the interviewees. Each of the ten reported on the issue of pride and respect in particular. It is of great importance that these attributes are respected and not violated, as this could lead to unpleasant situations. Some



respondents see a strong sense of national pride compared to German culture and point out that hurting the pride of Portuguese colleagues may lead to problems. Interviewee No. 8 commented on this: *“Especially when Portuguese people work internationally and are at meetings with business partners from other countries, one has to be a bit careful. I have experienced some situations and I think that national pride is a very important issue that needs to be taken into account. I think that the Portuguese are very sensitive about it, and you can put one foot in it very quickly. As a German, in comparison, I've also often found that people say negative things about Germany, but to be honest, I don't really care.”* Interviewee No. 9 justified the sensitivity of Portuguese when it comes to this pride with history: *“The pride comes from history. The Portuguese have conquered half the world and have lost a lot. This somehow gives them the feeling that they want to show that they are still there and that they are very good in what they do, which totally is the case!”*

Something that was mentioned repeatedly about pride and respect - directly by respondents No. 1, No. 5, and No. 10 – is the problem of *“losing face”* in front of other people, meaning to suffer embarrassment. The respondents see this as fatal for Portuguese and accordingly as something that Germans have to be very careful with. Interviewee No. 7 shared his experiences in this context: *“You have to be very careful that people don't feel attacked. You can make them feel offended rather easily than in Germany for example, and then they sometimes turn away from you. So sometimes in my perception, you can't get very close, which is a pity.. [...] I think that as a German I'm still much more direct than I probably should be when being in Portugal, even though I know it and try to keep it under control. Since I've been working in Germany again, I've noticed that my attempt to do things in the Portuguese way means that I'm seen as particularly appreciative, considerate, and respectful, and yet it seems that in Portugal many people's pride is still offended by my behavior.”*

The perceived interpersonal respect and appreciation in Portuguese culture was generally emphasized as very positive by the interviewees and was expressed in different contexts. Interviewee No. 2, for example, reported how important it can be for his business relationship *“to personally congratulate our supplier on his birthday, something that wouldn't be of real importance in Germany.”* Interviewee No. 3 referred primarily to social life: *“I find the respectful interaction in society in Portugal extremely pleasant. Young people regularly stand up when an older person gets on public transportation so that they can sit down. Or a pregnant woman, and so on. I think that has been totally lost in Germany. So, I have to say quite honestly, there are many social values that we as Germans would perhaps consider a bit outdated. But I say that this is beautiful and makes life worth living.”*

In summary, and already with regard to the next sub-item, which deals with diplomacy and consensus, it can be said that the German respondents perceive their Portuguese

colleagues and the culture in general as seeking harmony. A story from Interviewee No. 4, who reported on discussions between her colleagues, can be used as an example: *“Discussions were emotional, I would say, a bit louder and also in the way people spoke. But basically, the way they talked to each other, I would say that above all harmony is important. You also notice that when things are not directly addressed. Or if it was noticed that the other person was now a bit offended, then they approached each other again, simply so that harmony prevailed. So, I think the need for harmony is definitely there, that before you say something, you reflect on whether it really hurts someone or not. I think this is taken into account much more in Portugal than in Germany.”*

### ***Diplomacy and consensus***

Directly related to the need for harmony and mentioned by some of the interviewees is the pursuit of consensus and the diplomatic nature of Portuguese colleagues. These characteristics are particularly evident in discussions, arguments, and negotiations. Interviewee No. 2 reported on this: *“Discussions and arguments are different, which does not mean that they are not louder sometimes. But as they say in German: It’s not what you say, but how you say it. And you have to be very moderate. Let’s say that in Germany, in a dispute, the German would certainly insist to be right. The Portuguese are definitely not like that. One has two options in dialogue: Either one withdraws and reserves one’s own opinion, does not bring it up for discussion, and over time knows which points not to raise and which points to raise. That would be this kind of exploring the other person. The other option is: One adapts to the opinion of the other in order to achieve a common goal.”* Interviewee No.1 takes this view further and highlights the willingness to compromise and find ways that everyone in a group agrees on: *“The common Portuguese tends to be born a diplomat. In general, I have to say that people here are very willing to compromise. One tries to find ways that make you and the other person happy - in other words, a win-win situation - because one knows exactly that things can only continue together. So, this perception is constantly present. One alone achieves little and always tries to come to a consensus in the group. This is more pronounced than in Germany.”*

In addition, and the case of a problem or mistake committed in the working context, this constant striving for a common solution and group consensus was emphasized as particularly positive by Interviewee No. 5: *“You actually always get away from the: ‘Who is to blame? Who screwed up?’. Instead, you pursue the idea: ‘We’ll get it right. How do we fix it?’. And that is actually the only wise way to deal with mistakes or conflicts. Because if you get stuck in there and insist on what you think and the other person insists on their opinion, as is sometimes the case in Germany, then it can go on so that the conflict can last*

*unnecessarily long. Therefore, the Portuguese way of working together is actually very modern and progressive in my opinion."*

### **5.2.3 Indirectness**

Another cultural standard that emerged out of each of the interviews conducted and that was perceived as a significant difference from German culture is the indirectness of Portuguese compared to Germans. As already explained in point 2.2.1, according to Hall and Hall (1990) there are high-context and low-context cultures. They list Central European countries like Germany as low-context and Southern European countries such as Portugal as rather high-context cultures. During the interviews, this claim was confirmed by the German respondents.

Interviewee No. 1, for example, said that even after 18 years in Portugal he still had problems with communication: *"Indirect communication is extremely important. That's why it often happens to me that I don't understand things at all. So, reading between the lines is rather difficult for me as a German."* Some respondents perceive the way things are discussed or addressed as beating around the bush. In this regard, Interviewee No. 9 said: *"Germans are direct, and Portuguese beat around the bush. It's really like that, you can't put it into perspective. Of course, there are also Portuguese who tell you straight to your face what's going on, but in general, it's rather not like that."* Interviewee No. 2 also referred to this as follows: *"Well, it's not easy to understand what a Portuguese wants at first because he or she doesn't come out with it at all. This indirect way is actually something we don't know from Germany. We just go like a bull at a gate, as they say, Portuguese people don't do that. In other words, they beat around the bush."*

In the organizational environment and mostly reported by the interviewees, this indirect nature of Portuguese culture is particularly expressed in the way feedback or criticism is given and how problems are usually addressed - or not.

#### ***Reserved feedback and criticism***

Nine out of ten respondents spoke directly about their experiences of sharing but also receiving feedback. Especially when it comes to the topic of criticism, it was emphasized frequently that one has to be careful in how to transmit sensitive issues and that a too direct approach can lead to problems with Portuguese colleagues. This also correlates with the aspect mentioned in the previous cultural standard of being careful how to treat each other, as things can be more easily interpreted as a personal offense and lack of respect - from the German respondents' point of view. Interviewee No. 5 reported on her early days of working in the Portuguese organizational environment: *"Sometimes my criticism was certainly too*

*direct and too harsh, but at least no one could be surprised because it was then quite clear what it was about. As a direct person, however, I noticed that it was better to criticize the Portuguese more carefully, perhaps more indirectly. I noticed that and of course, I tried to adapt my style.*" Interviewee No. 1 has had similar experiences and also goes into more detail on the topic of feedback talks: *"When I came - I can still remember it well - the feedback I gave was very critical and that is not usual in Portugal, on the contrary. A feedback conversation itself is actually more about motivating someone and only reporting positively or giving positive feedback. Dealing with criticism is very difficult and should, if possible, only be addressed very indirectly."*

While interviewee No. 7 is of the opinion that *"it is a pity that you can't really criticize, because then in doubt the person doesn't even know that something is suboptimal and then he or she might go on like this without adapting"*, Interviewee No. 9 speaks from his experience as a long-term managing director and recommends a certain approach in dealing with Portuguese colleagues: *"Direct criticism is not welcome. So, you have to be careful how to address the criticism, it has to be told in a positive way, like: 'Maybe you have a way to improve it here. Try this or that way'. It should not be told in a direct, kind of German way, like: 'What you are doing here is not good at all. This has to be done like this and that.' That doesn't go down well at all! I've already noticed that."*

On the other hand, respondents also reported how they received and perceived feedback from Portuguese supervisors, confirming the previously cited reports. Interviewee No. 4 referred to this: *"I had the feeling that there was not really anything like criticism, it was definitely not directly addressed. It wasn't directly said: 'I don't like that'. But rather: 'You can do it like this, but maybe do it better like this and like that'. You notice that something is wrong or not so good, but you don't get told directly. In Germany, on the other hand, people tend to say directly: 'No, that's not so good because...'. So, they tend to say why something is not good, whereas in Portugal they don't go into the why and instead just suggest another way, something new."*

Interviewee No. 6 told of an incident in this regard and would have appreciated a more open and direct way of receiving feedback in order to be able to better assess and ultimately improve his work: *"There was once a conversation between two bosses about my performance, which I somehow heard of in a roundabout way. But no one came to me directly and said: 'Okay, you're doing a good job', but also no one came to me and said: 'You're doing a bad job'. In general, you get less feedback about your work, in my opinion. If something went wrong, I was told something like: 'Ok, try something else'. Sometimes I thought it would be good to have some direct feedback, just to see if I'm on the right track or if I need to change something. Since in Germany such things are addressed relatively clearly, it was unusual for me. Sometimes I was a bit annoyed when criticism was formulated*

*via third parties and not directly. Then, of course, the motivation is a bit gone, and that ultimately affects the performance as well.”*

### ***Difficulties in addressing problems***

In the cultural standard *Strong understanding of hierarchy*, it was already noted that Germans perceive a less pronounced speak-up culture, especially towards superiors in Portuguese everyday working life. However, in the context of indirectness, clearly addressing problems was generally perceived by some respondents as something that Portuguese colleagues or partners have difficulties with. Due to the indirect approach to addressing problems, it seems that it is often not easy for Germans to understand what the actual problem is. Interviewee No. 3 said in reference to this: *“You often have to read between the lines and understand where a problem might lie, which can be very difficult. Things are not necessarily put on the table in such an extreme objective way as it is sometimes with us in Germany. In Germany, there is sometimes no beating about the bush at all. Someone comes and says to everyone: ‘Yes, I have a problem now.’ That is not necessarily the case in Portugal.”* Interviewee No. 2 expressed a similar opinion but added how he sometimes handles a situation in which he understood the problem even though it has not been directly addressed: *“Portuguese have a hard time addressing problems. They have something on the tip of their tongues, they actually want to bring it out, but then they somehow try to make it as difficult as possible via many detours. You often stand there and think about what they actually wanted to convey to you, what the message or the essence is of what he or she said. But you can also try to get that out of a person by addressing the subject yourself. And then, of course, the Portuguese is sometimes very grateful that you have got an idea of what he or she is saying and have addressed it”.*

Respondent No. 7 furthermore reported that in his experience, problems were regularly ignored and downplayed unless it was absolutely unavoidable to address them: *“In my experience, clearly addressing problems is not well received or practiced by Portuguese colleagues. Problems are often swept under the carpet and then somehow transmitted backward or downwards, but in any case not directly if it cannot be avoided. If you can sit them out, then it’s often the first solution, and sitting them out takes time. It can take a few weeks or months to find out whether you still have to tackle the problem somehow or whether you have successfully sat it out.”*

#### **5.2.4 Inefficiency in Communication and Decision-making**

Something that was repeatedly raised in one way or another by eight of the German respondents during the interviews is the issue of perceived inefficiency due to overly communicating in certain situations in the working environment and the resulting loss of time. Inefficiency was therefore found to affect decision-making processes and would be particularly evident in meetings, as explained in more detail in the second subsection of this cultural standard. First, the high proportion of verbal communication in the Portuguese working environment from a German perspective is discussed.

##### ***High level of verbal communication***

According to the respondents, a high proportion of verbal communication seems to be very usual within the Portuguese working environment while it is rather unusual for them as Germans. They perceive a lot of verbal communication in all kinds of situations in Portugal, whether it is about making important decisions or just having a casual chat at work. Interviewee No. 5 went into more detail about the use of verbal and written communication, which in her opinion represents a major difference between Portugal and Germany: *“I think what emails are for Germans, conversations are for Portuguese people, also on the phone. It doesn't really matter how; the main thing is conversation. Portuguese would rather talk than write, and we Germans think: ‘You can summarise that in a short email, we don't need to talk to each other. Why should we? Just a waste of time!’ Of course, that's an extreme way of putting it, but I can confirm that in Portugal a personal conversation can be much more effective and result-oriented than some Germans might think. People do talk a lot here, not only about coffee and the weekend but also about work. It's simply much more verbal than written. Portuguese are definitely more communicative than us Germans”.*

Interviewee No. 1 also perceives a high level of verbal communication compared to Germany and has different opinions on this as he sees both positive and negative aspects, especially in the area of decision-making: *“I see the whole issue of communication as a double-edged sword, both positive and negative. There are things that bother me a bit. Still, even after 18 years here in Portugal. And there are things that I find very good in communication. My perception is that Portuguese colleagues communicate a lot. So, you don't really need an open-plan office, I would say, but in a natural way, there is always an open-door atmosphere and culture. We experienced this ourselves in the company when we changed from individual offices to open-plan offices. And I have to say that this has tended to have a negative effect in some areas because people overcommunicate and this can be stressful. Over-communication in the sense of dramatizing something that is perhaps not so dramatic. And that also shows in the fact that everyone has an opinion about everything - even though the superior decides in the end. In Germany, in working life, I was used to the*

*idea that there are hierarchies of competence in certain discourses and decision-making. And depending on that, people are invited to certain meetings and are then allowed to participate in certain discourses or discussions. We have that here in Portugal too, but not so much as in Germany. If everyone can give their opinion on everything, then it can happen that it is very easy to get lost in the discussions in order to make decisions. But it also has advantages, in the sense that there are more opinions on topics and there are more perspectives that you can evaluate and from which you can see things.”*

### ***Unstructured and unproductive meetings***

The Portuguese meeting culture was perceived as significantly different from the German by all respondents who commented on this topic. Also due to the extensive verbal communication described above, meetings are often perceived as unproductive, too long, and held unnecessarily frequently. From the interviewees' point of view, this has a considerable impact on the efficiency of decision-making. Interviewee No. 3 noted in this regard: *“The meeting culture is relatively pronounced here in Germany. We are quite structured, and meetings rarely take place where a decision is not made, and the results are documented in some form. In Portugal, it can happen that there are several meetings on one topic and the discussions are unstructured and the meeting is left without a result. And then there can be two or three follow-up meetings. But it is not necessarily the case that there is a concrete output that you can now take and work with. You have to work hard to ensure that this is the case, that you really say: 'So, these are the results, and we will now record them and implement them’”*. Interviewee No. 5 was of the same opinion and indirectly addressed a lack of efficiency that comes with an excessive frequency of meetings: *“In Portugal, people like to talk about everything. So, they like to have three times as many meetings as they actually need. For someone like me who tends to work very time efficiently, this is not so good, I would say because you actually want to see the opposite. The less time I need for anything, even for meetings, the better. If there is a topic, then I start with it, without a big introduction, without first talking about the weekend, that's not really my thing.”*

The reason why meetings are often perceived as too long and somehow unproductive was described in more detail by several respondents. Interviewee No. 10 generalized this and commented as follows: *“Well, I would say that in meetings in Portugal there is usually a strong deviation from the topic. People tend to talk about other, everyday things rather than about the topic, and people are sometimes not so focused on the important things to discuss in my perception”*. While Interviewee No. 8 perceives, especially at the beginning of meetings, that there is *“[...] a lot of small talks, especially compared to Germany with chatting about football or the previous day's dinner and so on”*, Interviewee No. 6 rather had the experience of over-communication towards the end of the meeting as he stated: *“After the*

*important points, questions were asked about the work and then the unstructured stuff started. When this structure was left, you started to go over everything a bit, and then it dragged on. Meetings were very long, which is something I didn't know from Germany. Or that you simply address things that are perhaps not so interesting in the meeting such as personal matters."*

Interviewee No.7 confirmed the comments just cited and pointed in particular to the mixing of private and work-related matters, which is taken up further in the cultural standard *Significance of Interpersonal Relations* and leads to a certain lack of objectivity from a German view: *"You can set an agenda, but the course of meetings is basically unstructured. I think it's just the nature of the Portuguese to distract themselves a bit. So somehow you get from the 100th to the 1,000th and then end up with some family issues during an important meeting. Even if it's just because a mobile phone rings in the middle of the meeting and some child is calling from the hospital or somewhere else. This mixing of private and work-related matters can also be positive. It's just so mixed up and unstructured sometimes. I appreciate that here in Germany too, that people first make personal small talk and then move on to business or vice versa, or place business between private topics, but it's clearly separated, and the conversation is structured. I have experienced that quite rarely in Portugal."*

Another aspect that the interviewees noticed is that it not only takes longer to come to decisions but that decisions are also more often taken back and re-decided or not even implemented. This can also be attributed to the flexible approach of Portuguese, which is described in more detail in the cultural standard of *Flexible, Short-term Planning and Improvisation*. Interviewee No. 4 reported: *"I definitely believe that it takes much longer to make a decision. I have also noticed that decisions are sometimes not implemented and also more often taken back because suddenly a lot of information has come in and everything has to be adjusted at short notice. That happened to me much more often in Portugal than now in Germany"*. Interviewee No. 3 confirms this and points out that the final implementation of decisions is often not an easy undertaking, whereby she referred to a story outside of work: *"It can also happen that a decision is questioned again at one point or another, or if you don't necessarily keep an eye on it being implemented, then it's not necessarily a foregone conclusion. In Germany, it would definitely be the case that if you have a meeting and a decision is made and the results are recorded, then it is quite clear that they will be implemented. A short story about this: I still have a flat in Portugal and once a year there is an owners' meeting and there are wild discussions and of course, decisions are made. And now on Saturday, there's another one and I've just had another look at the minutes from the last one. All the decisions we made have not been implemented."*



### 5.2.5 Irregular Flow of Time

Concerning the understanding of time, which was described in 2.2.1 with reference to Edward Hall, there are monochronic and polychronic cultures. While in monochronic cultures great value is placed on time, in polychronic cultures, time is rather seen as flexible. From this as well as the next cultural standard, it can be well understood from the reports of the interviewees that Portugal has a polychronic understanding of time compared to Germany, which is rather monochronic.

#### ***Late working hours and frequent brakes***

Something that struck seven interviewees very much was the different daily rhythm in which people work and live in Portugal compared to Germany. They reported that people would start working later and that there is not really a specific time at the end of the day when they stop working. As mentioned above, the time spent on work is very important and clearly defined for Germans. For example, while Interviewee No. 5 stated that in Portugal - unlike in Germany - one should *"[...] not schedule meetings before 10 am because that is perceived as very impolite"*, Interviewee No. 8 spoke about working hours: *"It's not like in Germany that you start at 8 am and stop at 5 pm, definitely not. Lunch can take a bit longer and sometimes you don't stop working until 8 pm, for example, it's a bit more flexible."*

Interviewee No. 9 affirmed these opinions and went into more detail on the subject of frequent breaks and lunch, which is extremely important for Portuguese, and which can be very unusual and stressful for Germans. This way the linear rhythm of the day, a planned schedule, cannot run in a timely manner: *"When it comes to the daily routine, there is a huge cultural difference between the Portuguese work culture and our German. We generally have clearly defined working hours. Portuguese have more flexible working hours because of their way of living mainly. They generally don't start before 9 am. And then it already starts in the morning that the Portuguese first go for a coffee. Many don't even have breakfast at home as we usually do in Germany but eat breakfast in a coffee shop, drink a coffee, and like to have the first small talk of the day. But that's cultural and they love it. And when I go to see a client, I don't go until 9:30 am. Then we go for a coffee and then we go to the meeting and the meetings don't start until 10 am and they drag on. And we Germans usually just want to get through our agenda. Portuguese people love to take a break, go for coffee again, have small talk again, and then, at some time go to lunch. That's something that doesn't fit into the concept for us Germans. If you have a schedule, you should stick to it, and then lunch is absolutely secondary. For Portuguese, lunch comes first, that's where it all stops for them unless there is an absolute urgency. In that case, you can bridge the lunch break with a sandwich. But only if there is absolutely no other alternative because Portuguese always go out for lunch."* In this regard, Interviewee No. 3 shared positive memories of her time in

Portugal about the extensive lunches and their strong influence on the rhythm of the day: *“In Germany, you only take lunch breaks as much as you need to, for example, to eat the food you brought yourself quickly so that you don't lose a lot of time and can finish work as soon as possible. Not at all in Portugal. What I enjoyed very much were the lunches with my colleagues. Sometimes you actually take two hours for lunch. If the weather is nice, you go to a restaurant at the Tejo riverside or somewhere else and have a good time. But then, of course, you sit in the office until 8 pm or 9 pm. Of course, the two hours we spent eating there have to be made up in the evening. But nobody looks at the clock and says: ‘I stop working at 5 pm’, as would be the case in Germany.”*

It is noticeable that the frequent and longer breaks have something to do with the social character of Portuguese people, as lunch or coffee breaks are spent with colleagues and as already mentioned, there usually is a lot of communication. Therefore, as Interviewee No. 5 confirmed: *“There is much more social interaction than in the German work culture.”* The emphasis on social relations in Portugal will further be the subject of the cultural standard *Significance of Interpersonal Relations* discussed below.

### ***Unpunctuality and delays***

Another rather short sub-item that was referred to by half of the respondents in relation to this cultural standard is the matter of punctuality. Compared to their own culture, Germans perceive things often starting later and unpunctual in the Portuguese working environment.

Most of the interviewees related this issue to the generally late start of meetings. As Interviewee No. 8 said in this regard: *“If it says that a meeting starts at 10 am, then it only starts when the boss is there. And if he's not there until 10:30 am, which often happened, then it doesn't start until then”*. Interviewee No. 4 also had the feeling that *“[...] people are late for meetings more often than it was the case in Germany”*.

Since meetings, as described in 5.2.3, often take much longer than planned, everything that comes afterward during the day also tends to be delayed, as Interviewee No. 7 described: *“Portuguese tend to be late and that is simply because everything is kind of late. If you start with appointments and meetings in the morning, and each of these appointments starts late and ends late, then you are automatically late for the next subsequent appointments, or you have planned too tightly. But even if you've planned the way you think it's going to work out, it still mostly doesn't. So really, it's a cliché, but it's also really true. So, the punctuality thing is sometimes difficult for me as a German. You can't rely on every meeting starting 15 minutes later, because that would be some kind of punctuality, but unfortunately, everything is rather unpredictable.”*

### **Last-minute deadlines**

When it comes to deadlines for submissions or completion of projects, the majority of respondents stated that although this is usually done within the timeframe, it is almost always last-minute and therefore often involves a lot of overtime and stress.

In this respect, Interviewee No. 10 describes processes in her industry, the natural stone trade: *"Deadlines are usually met under pressure. That's because Portuguese take their time first, depending on whom they are working with. If they deliver something to Portuguese people, then the deadline is often postponed to next week or the week after. But if there is a deadline from a foreigner, a German, for example, then suddenly they work the whole day and night for the last one or two days and work overtime to meet it. The problem is that, in my opinion, Portuguese people don't organize themselves very well and like to do things on the side that are not so important at the moment. And then other things get neglected and end up having to be done last-minute under pressure."* Regarding the lack of time and organization management, Interviewee No. 4 agrees and thinks that this leads to stressful last-minute situations: *"I have the feeling that Portuguese people strive to be organized. However, I also think that there are a few points that don't work so well such as time management, for example, estimating how long a task will take. I often had the feeling that when we started a new task, everything was very relaxed and then towards the end, everyone was extremely stressed and worked a lot of overtime to somehow get it done."*

Interviewee No. 5 reported that she and her team were regularly confronted with important and strict deadlines imposed by the German head office. To her surprise, her Portuguese colleagues always met the deadlines, sometimes under great stress and time pressure, and she further questioned whether such a commitment to work overtime would also be the case in Germany: *"Overtime was worked, especially when it came to the end of the month when the numbers had to be handed in. And I really believe that some people spent the night there. It was such an insane amount of work on the part of the people that I dare to doubt whether it would have been the same in Germany. I also like to be a last-minute person, so I have good last-minute nerves, but they were put to the test by my co-workers from time to time. There were really hard deadlines, which were not set by me, but were set in Germany and we really had to deliver, there was no other way. So, I really thought once or twice: 'They won't make it today, it's not even possible anymore.' But they managed it. They delivered every time, but you really can't have weak nerves working that way."*

### 5.2.6 Flexible, Short-term Planning and Improvisation

In the organizational environment, planning and anticipation self-explanatorily play a major role. However, there are different approaches from culture to culture. While Germans generally tend to think in the long term and plan accordingly, the opposite tends to be the case in Portuguese culture, as reported by all ten interviewees. In addition to the generally more short-term thinking and planning, the keywords flexibility and improvisation play a significant role.

Interviewee No. 1 reported in this context and especially in relation to his position and department about the problems he had and still has as a German in the Portuguese working environment: *“As a very important point, I have to say that in my business area of sales and marketing, the subject of anticipation and planning is a red flag for the common Portuguese. A red flag in the sense that, in principle, you don't really do it here. Planning ahead is very difficult in Portugal. Historically, I think, too, because things are always very flexible, and many things can change unlike in Germany where things are rather fixed, politically as well as organizationally. But that's not always the case in Portugal, and that's my impression with many colleagues or with the managers with whom I do the planning. For example, when I really try to anticipate in the discussions what and when something might happen. This communication or this discourse is not welcomed or not loved, compared to me as a German. I like planning ahead because I don't like bad surprises. Often I hear: 'Yes, okay, let's plan.' But the thing is that in Germany a plan is a plan, and in Portugal, on the other hand, a plan is something that probably won't happen as initially defined. And I have to say that as a German, I suffer a bit from the fact that the planning security that one has in Germany is much less in Portugal. However, there is always a flexible willingness on the part of all those involved to somehow achieve a goal that has been set.”*

Both interviewees No. 3 and No. 7 also perceived a less pronounced planning culture compared to Germany, which ultimately results in a very short-term oriented daily work routine. Interviewee No. 3 noted: *“In general, everything is less structured than in Germany and this also includes relatively weak time planning, people tend to think in the short term. I mean, you work off what you have at the moment. And to think: 'What does my work plan look like in the long term? What am I going to do in the next quarter? How can I organize my work well?' That doesn't happen in most cases.”* Interviewee No. 7 added in this and with regard to the aforementioned last-minute subject: *“I very often experienced that there is a short-term focus on things that are absolutely unavoidable and that have to be done urgently in order to avoid any consequences, for example, hard deadlines. The fact that it has to be about avoiding consequences at all is completely contrary to German management and planning. But in Portugal, you sometimes have to work like that. And as people often focus*

*on the most urgent things they forget that they also have other tasks at the same time. So, in my perception, Portuguese take a quite short-term view of everything and act accordingly.”*

Following the interviewees, the less pronounced long-term planning in the Portuguese working world is made up of the ability to act very flexibly at any time and by a talent for improvisation. Interviewee No. 9 drew a comparison between Germans and Portuguese in the case of spontaneously occurring problems: *“If there is a problem that arises spontaneously, in Germany you often stand there and say: ‘How do I get out of here now?’ Portuguese are generally more flexible than us Germans. They basically live in a flexible world and are therefore more used to unforeseen problems and come up with problem-solving ideas more quickly than Germans. I have this thought regularly when I see my colleagues solving certain issues.”* Interviewee No. 7 confirmed this view as he reported: *“Since Portuguese are quite flexible, they always find some kind of solution that is not permanent but solves the problem for the moment. And sometimes you need something like that. I don’t think we Germans are the greatest at coming up with quick solutions like that. And when we absolutely have to do it, we Germans try to find a permanent solution that takes time. So, this ability to find short-term solutions, to solve problems very quickly, that’s something we Germans can learn from Portuguese colleagues.”* In this context, interviewee No. 1 admitted that, despite the eventual success, he has not always expected it: *“Sometimes I really wondered how and why a certain project or strategy worked out, here in Portugal. In my opinion, it has a lot to do with the fact that there is a lot of improvisation despite little planning.”*

On the subject of improvisation, interviewee No. 5 told a story that surprised her very much as a German and that she would not have thought possible: *“We once had visitors from Germany, many high-ranking people, bosses, and so on. At 9 am in the morning, someone had the idea of having a small party, with music, a band, and food. I just thought that we would think of it much too late and that it would be a rather boring affair, that they would come from Germany, give a lecture and leave. But my colleagues managed to organize a party until 5 pm. We had a buffet, a band playing music, and there was a magician. It was a great little business party. So that was very nice and felt like a ten-man team would have planned that over a longer period of time. Portuguese really get something like that done in no time and of course, that’s also because everything is a bit more flexible than in Germany. There, the band would probably already have been planned for the long term. But in Portugal, something like this works really well.”*

### 5.2.7 Significance of Interpersonal Relations

Hofstede's cultural dimension of Individualism vs. Collectivism was described in detail in 3.2, where Germany was presented as a more individualistic society and Portugal as a collectivistic society. In principle, this means that relationships within groups, such as the family, but also in the organizational environment, are generally closer and more personal in Portugal than in Germany.

This explanation matches what was described in the course of the interviews as eight of ten respondents reported on the importance of social relationships and interpersonal reference points in Portuguese work settings. In previous cultural standards, aspects were already mentioned that are directly related to the importance of social relationships. On the one hand, the strong interpersonal empathy and respect described in 5.2.2 play a major role in the formation of trusting and long-lasting relationships. On the other hand, the more personal rather than factual relationships in the workplace can be recognized, for example, by the fact that people often talk about private matters in everyday work or meetings, as mentioned in 5.2.4.

Interviewee No. 8 mentioned in this context the importance of interpersonal relationships as well as points of reference outside the workplace for the working environment: *“The interpersonal aspect is very important, relationships are very important, especially building relationships. I always had the feeling that here many already knew each other somehow through university or family relationships or whatever. I think in Portugal it's very important to have reference points to each other, to have worked with someone for a long time, or to know each other outside of work. It's just important to know personal things about each other, like where the family of a colleague comes from, where they studied, where they always go on holiday and so on. I think that plays a much bigger role here than in Germany.”*

Interviewee No. 10 confirmed this impression and thinks that relationships in the organizational environment are often built outside the workplace based on equal interests: *“From my working experience I perceived, and that's quite different to Germany, that trust, and good relationships are formed mainly based on interests outside working hours. What connects Portuguese people is not so much work itself, but rather what happens outside of work. Whether they like to go out for a meal together or go cycling, play or watch football or when they go out together after work.”*

Interviewee No. 7 confirmed this perception, adding that social relations and the resulting trust in each other are largely determined by personal reference points than by actual work performance. He also referred to the much more personal communication in the organizational environment compared to Germany: *“I can tell that communication in the work environment has a lot to do with private matters and that is how you clarify whether there is a*

*similarity of interests. For example, if the other person also has children and they are more or less the same age, or the mother has the same doctor. Things like that are much more effective in building a relationship at the workplace than in Germany. And that someone keeps their word in terms of work, for example, meets a deadline or does what they promised, is, of course, important, but not quite as important as in Germany from what I have seen. Here in Portugal, the personal component additionally plays a big role.”* He also gives an example of how personal relationships at work can be beneficial in some situations: *“If your children are sick, for example, in Germany it's up to the wife or the husband or grandparents, it doesn't really matter who takes care of it, as long as it's taken care of. Nobody knows whether the grandparents live in the same town or not. But in Portugal, I have the impression that everyone knows that about every colleague because there is a personal connection. Not in Germany, where nobody is interested in such things. So, I think in Portugal it's much easier to combine private things like family matters and work because it's usually totally fine for all of the colleagues.”* Interviewee No. 5 also reported on the shared social life not only during but also after work, something that is considerably more prevailing than in Germany: *“I really noticed the social life in the office. It's more on a personal level. In Germany, there might be a departmental lunch or something, but that's usually it. In Portugal, especially as a foreigner, you are incredibly invited. You get tips or are asked: ‘What are you doing tonight? And do you already know this or that? Let's go out together tonight and I'll show you this or that’. And that's not only what happened to me, but also many of my colleagues.”*

Something that was already mentioned in the cultural standard *Irregular Flow of Time* and was also referred to more frequently in the context of social relationships is the importance of shared meals. In addition to the high value placed on food, as Interviewee No. 3 reported, it is above all about socializing among colleagues: *“Food has a completely different value in Portugal than in Germany. So, people are quite willing to spend more time or even more money on food, and if you can do it together with your colleagues in a nice environment and have fun and socialize, then that is important for a Portuguese person, even in the working environment”.*

However, in Portugal and in the view of the German respondents, shared meals are not only important among colleagues but also among business partners and potential clients, as Interviewee No. 2 and Interviewee No. 9 stated. In this context, spending time together outside of business, such as having lunch or dinner, serves to build trust. Interviewee No. 2 reported in this regard: *“You have a much more personal connection than in Germany. This means that some of the meetings I have with Portuguese business partners are not only aimed at concluding contracts but also at meeting in the evening in a pub or restaurant or over a meal together. What is very important is that people in Portugal talk to each other*

*much more than in Germany. That means that contact is more important, which can of course be a problem for us Germans because you lose a lot of time with so many personal contacts. You have to meet people, so you have to have time and the chemistry has to be right. For us Germans, that's not always so easy, because we don't always understand some things right away. Portuguese often care about things that have nothing to do with the actual business and that means you have to look for common ground on a personal level before you look for common ground on a business level. A relationship in Germany is much more objective. If the prices or conditions are right, you can make a deal more quickly than in Portugal, where you first have to warm up to each other. Once you've got the hang of it, many things go on for a very long time. This transition between private and business is very strongly connected.”*

Interviewee No. 9 went further on the subject of trust, which is in his perception of great significance to Portuguese people and only on the basis on which strong and long-lasting personal relationships can be established: *“With Portuguese, trust is the be-all and end-all, and gaining it sometimes takes a long time. Why? Because the Portuguese are negotiators. He first wants to find out from the other side: 'What can he do? Can I rely on him?' That's a very important point for the Portuguese, that they realize that they are respected. That might take a little longer and you have to take your time. So, you rarely get through this strict agenda with Portuguese people, negotiations take much longer than with Germans. It's all about trust.”*

In this context, he also told a story about a negotiation round between Germans and Portuguese. He had participated in the negotiations which were, in his opinion, a good illustration of the differences between the two cultures in terms of the personal versus the factual as the Portuguese tried to establish an interpersonal relation first while the German only aimed to do business as fast as possible: *“I had a very big negotiation, and a member of the board of a big German company and the sales manager came. And then we said we would be on-site at noon and that the Portuguese client has to receive us at 2 pm at the latest. We thought the negotiation would last around two hours and at 4 pm we would have to leave again to get the plane back at 7 pm. So, the German board of directors could only be there for one day, there was no other way they said. For the Portuguese client, it was a big negotiation that doesn't happen every day. At noon there was no one there, at 2 pm the Portuguese came back from lunch and said: 'Ah, it's nice that you're here, now let's have a coffee'. The German director looked at me and said: 'I'm not here to drink coffee. I'm here to have a negotiation!' But then they went to have a coffee and then we sat down. And then the Portuguese started talking: 'Ah, I think German culture is great and I was there at the beer festival, and I think Lufthansa is much better than TAP.' So, he kept trying to start conversations and it went on like that the whole time. Then, to the German's displeasure,*



*they had to have another coffee, and then the chatter continued. After that, the Germans finally understood that there was no point in trying to push something through in a hurry and eventually the negotiations began. And at 10 pm in the evening, after the big dinner, we did a sequence and did the assignment.”*

### **5.3 Feedback**

As described in Chapter 4, the Cultural Standards Method process also includes a feedback phase to confirm the validity of the identified cultural standards. Eight preliminary cultural standards emerged from the analysis of the interviewee content. These were sent for evaluation to the ten interviewees as well as to three other Germans and also Portuguese who work in Portugal but did not participate in the interviews. The German respondents affirmed almost all of the identified cultural standards and highlighted that they would feel the same way. The Portuguese recognized themselves and their behavior in 7 out of 8 of the identified cultural standards and found it very interesting to reflect on their culture and see how Germans would perceive them.

However, the main result of the feedback round was the removal of the preliminary cultural standard *Loose Attitude toward Professionalism* as it was questioned by both German and Portuguese feedback providers. Over the course of the interviews, only five respondents contributed narratives to this cultural standard, and these narratives were not directly related to each other. On the one hand, unprepared meetings, insufficient assessment of workload or tasks, and lax attitude at the beginning of projects were mentioned. On the other hand, unrelated issues like a lack of an attitude towards service in hotels or poor quality of goods in the natural stone trade were referred to. Since several of the interviewees objected to this preliminary cultural standard, it could not be considered fully valid and was removed.

Interviewee No. 5, when giving feedback on this cultural standard, stated: *"No, I'm sorry but I'm afraid I have to disagree with you on this one. From my experience, and what I have already said in the interviews, I have perceived Portuguese as very hard working, and at the end of projects I received very good results, even if it seemed impossible. It may be that they have a different approach than us Germans at the beginning of a project, but I wouldn't see this as a lack of professionalism."* Interviewees No. 8 and No. 9 also disagreed with this cultural standard for similar reasons. No. 8 said: *"Unfortunately, I cannot confirm this. My experience with Portuguese in the work area is that, if properly guided, they do very good and concentrated work. I never really had the feeling that there was a lack of professionalism."* No. 9 further stated: *"As I explained earlier, if you give the right and clear*

*instructions and deal correctly with your employees, you can definitely expect very good work and results. So, I cannot fully agree here".*

Interviewee No. 1, who works in a large multinational corporation, could not confirm this view either: *"So I have to say that I can't really agree with that. I work with Portuguese people on the management level every day and I definitely don't feel any lack of professionalism, which then affects the quality. Of course, as I have already said, I would do things differently here and there, especially when it comes to planning. But that's something cultural and has nothing to do with professionalism."*

Furthermore, some of the respondents also commented on other cultural standards, such as the sub-item *Unpunctuality and delays*. Although only half of the interviewees commented directly on this during the interviews, this topic was taken up again during feedback. Both interviewees No. 3 and No. 5 did not mention anything about this point during their interviews but stated in their feedback that this was true compared to Germany. No. 3 said: *"This is mainly a stereotype. Nevertheless, I have to say that it also corresponds to some extent to the truth, especially in comparison to Germany. But it's not as pronounced as some might think."* The only one who contradicted this was Interviewee No. 1: *"Well, even if that's the typical prejudice, generally in relation to Southern Europeans, I can't confirm that from my work experience here."*

As for the other seven cultural standards, the ones that are related to time (including meetings), communication, the understanding of hierarchy, and the personal and caring relationships between people, in particular, were met with great approval among respondents.

## 6. ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

Since the research study suggests relatively large cultural differences between Germany and Portugal in the organizational environment, as do the models of Hofstede and Meyer, the cultural standards were compared and discussed with these two established theories. The objective of this comparison is to identify eventual similarities or differences. As will be shown below, there are considerable correspondences between the identified cultural standards and the models of Hofstede and Meyer.

### 6.1 Comparison to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

#### Power Distance (PDI)

As already mentioned in 3.2, Portugal has a significantly higher score in the PDI dimension than Germany. Accordingly, it can be assumed that hierarchical structures and the unequal distribution of power and authority are more pronounced in Portuguese culture compared to German culture.

In fact, this impression was unanimously confirmed by the German respondents, as shown in the culture standard *Strong Understanding of Hierarchy*. In the Portuguese working environment, it became clear that from the German view there mostly is a greater distance between boss and employees compared with Germany. This is expressed, for example, in particular forms of behavior towards the boss, or in less questioning of the superior's opinion, which is regarded by Germans as a lack of speak-up culture. In the Portuguese working environment as perceived by the interviewees, the unequal distribution of power in the hierarchical order is usually accepted by employees. In return, and as Hofstede also suggests, a superior such as the boss is expected to lead and control the team, make the final decisions, and know about everything. As workers accept their clearly defined role within the organization and rely on instructions from their superiors, Germans perceive a considerably less autonomous working style in Portugal compared to their own culture. However, when taking the approach of instructing and guiding the Portuguese colleagues, there may be very good outcomes. This confirms Hofstede's theory that employees in cultures with high PDI such as Portugal feel more comfortable under clearly defined and autocratic leadership than under participative leadership and work more efficiently as a result.

#### Individualism vs. Collectivism

The assumptions of the second cultural dimension *Individualism vs. Collectivism*, according to which Germany is considered a more individualistic culture and Portugal a more

collectivistic culture, were also thoroughly supported by some of the Portuguese cultural standards identified.

Firstly, the collectivist character of Portuguese culture in the work environment is related to the previously mentioned cultural standard *Strong Understanding of Hierarchy*. As already mentioned, this cultural standard also addresses the issue of a willingness to take sole responsibility. German participants perceived that in Portugal individual decisions are less willingly made, and responsibility is often gladly shared in the group with colleagues. This confirms Hofstede's theory that decisions in collectivist cultures are usually made for the good of the group rather than for the good of the individual.

Since there is a strong group understanding in comparison to the German, rather individualistic culture, it was perceived that Portuguese tend not to deviate from the general opinion and to take personal responsibility for something that could have negative consequences for the group. In this way, the sole eventual failure is avoided, which can be a major problem for members of a collectivist culture like the Portuguese. In the course of the interviews, the reason for this behavior was connected by the German interviewees to the upbringing in the family context, amongst others. This is consistent with Hofstede's aforementioned assumption that children in collectivist cultures are less likely to be raised to become independent and decide for themselves as individuals, but rather to subordinate themselves to the interest of the group in return for long-lasting loyalty and emotional security. From this supposition, it can also be concluded that the boss, as the highest authority in an organization, can be seen as more like a family head and that the working relationship is more tied to emotions, morality, and loyalty.

As mentioned in 3.2, management in collective cultures is about managing the group, which is evident in the cultural standard *Inefficiency in Communication and Decision-making*. Here, from a German perspective, it was reported that meetings in Portugal about specific topics may take place with the participation of employees who might not have enough expertise to discuss the topic efficiently. However, given the collective nature of Portuguese culture, a superior would tend to rather invite subordinates than exclude them from the meeting. Exclusion could create a feeling of non-belonging, which poses a significant emotional problem for members of collective societies and could subsequently lead to less motivation and therefore weaker performance on the part of the respective employee.

Further considerable similarities with the collectivist orientation of Portuguese culture according to Hofstede can be seen in the cultural standard *Significance of Interpersonal Relations*. Following the German perception, relationships in the Portuguese working environment are kept at a more personal level and based primarily on trust. Building trust between colleagues can take some time and is fostered by also talking about private matters and not mainly about factual issues, or by doing something together outside the workplace.

Once trust is established, it lasts longer and provides the necessary foundation for fruitful collaboration, both between colleagues at the working place and also business partners. Moreover, personal trust in each other in the Portuguese organizational environment is seen by some of the participants as more important than actual work performance, which is consistent with Hofstede's assumption that in collectivist cultures the personal relationship has a higher priority than the task or job itself.

### **Masculinity vs. Femininity**

According to Hofstede's third cultural dimension, *Masculinity vs. Femininity*, German culture tends to be masculine while Portuguese culture tends to be feminine. These assumptions are especially confirmed by the Portuguese cultural standards of *Emotionality and Sensitivity* and *Indirectness*.

As reported by the German respondents and presented in the cultural standard *Emotionality and Sensitivity*, mutual respect, emotional perception, and the ability to empathize are considered very important in Portuguese society. People principally avoid hurting each other's feelings and strive for harmony, whether in daily life or organizational settings. For this reason, confrontations are usually avoided, as they could damage a relationship in the long term. In the Portuguese organizational environment, which fully confirms Hofstede's theory of feminine cultures, there is generally an attempt to solve problems and conflicts through compromise and diplomatic behavior, to reach a consensus and find the best solution for everyone in the group. This characteristic also applies to the aforementioned collectivist character of Portuguese culture, since, as shown, the will of the group is more important than the will of an individual.

Hofstede's theory of a feminine Portuguese culture is also supported by the cultural standard of *Indirectness*. For the reasons explained above, especially to avoid hurting the feelings of others, negative feedback and criticism in the Portuguese organizational environment were perceived as a very sensitive issue by the German respondents. In order to maintain harmony, direct and blunt criticism is less appreciated, as it could be perceived as a lack of respect toward another person. Furthermore, and also shown by the cultural standard of *Indirectness*, addressing problems directly is rather difficult for Portuguese, at least in the organizational environment. On the one hand, this could be explained by the attempt to avoid disagreements and subsequent unwanted confrontations. On the other hand, and according to Hofstede's theory that polarization is not valued in feminine cultures, employees tend not to argue against differing, perhaps more commonly accepted opinions. This point could also be attributed to the collectivist orientation of Portuguese society as individuals have the tendency not to go against the will of the group.

### **Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)**

Both the German and Portuguese cultures score high and very high respectively on Hofstede's UAI dimension. In contrast to previously analyzed dimensions, this cultural dimension is less strongly supported by the identified Portuguese cultural standards and is even contradictory in parts. According to Hofstede, virtues such as organization, precision, and punctuality are characteristics of cultures with a high UAI. In the case of the cultural standard *Irregular Flow of Time*, it became clear from some reports that Portuguese people do strive for such virtues in the work context. However, due to insufficient time management and organization as perceived by Germans and also shown in the sub-item *Unpunctuality and delays*, this desired practice is sometimes less successful.

The internal urge for rules, which is typical for cultures with a high UAI, according to Hofstede, can be understood on the one hand based on the sub-item *Limited autonomous working* within the cultural standard *Strong Understanding of Hierarchy*. The German respondents felt that their Portuguese employees or subordinates usually need instructions to follow during their work process. The instructions could be interpreted as rules and regulations that give Portuguese people the necessary security when carrying out a task process, and also to be able to avoid unpredictable, undesirable results.

On the other hand, the need for rules and regulation as well as the avoidance of stress-triggering unknown situations can be described using the sub-item *Last-minute deadlines*. A hard deadline, especially when set by foreign partners, clients, or headquarters, can be interpreted as a rule that should not be broken as this could lead to unknown, negative consequences. To meet a deadline, that is, not to break a rule and to avoid unknown future situations, people reportedly work disproportionately hard and are driven by stress in the German perception. This also corresponds with Hofstede's assumption of people in cultures with a high UAI working hard for job security.

According to the cultural dimension of UAI, it could be argued that to avoid such situations, better and more long-term planning should be done in advance. As the respondents indicated during the research process and as shown in the cultural standard *Flexible, Short-term Planning and Improvisation*, such behavior is rather typical for Germans. Yet, this situation can also be interpreted differently, in the sense that Portuguese people tend not to plan to respond to changing and uncertain situations. Germans, by contrast, plan to avoid such situations in the first place. Nevertheless, stress and anxiety tend to be triggered in both cultures when confronted with uncertain situations in the future, they simply cope with them differently, according to the author's analysis.

### **Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation**

Hofstede's fifth dimension *Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation* was supported in particular by the cultural standard of *Flexible, Short-term Planning and Improvisation*. According to this, the Portuguese work context is often much less about long-term achievable or plannable goals than in Germany, but rather about short-term and quick outcomes and returns. Due to this cultural characteristic from a German perspective, managers and employees in Portugal rarely think and act pragmatically in the long term and tend to move from one thing to the next. Here, precedence is usually taken, and principally the most urgent concern is paid attention to, while most other priorities are temporarily disregarded and put to the side, as reported in the interviews.

### **Indulgence vs. Restraint**

Since no cultural differences in the organizational environment are identified that are related to this cultural dimension, no comparison or analysis was made.

## **6.2 Comparison to Meyer's eight culture scales**

### **Communicating: low-context vs. high-context**

According to Meyer, Portuguese tend to use high-context communication, while communication in German culture is rather low-context. This assumption was confirmed during the interviews and is particularly supported by the cultural standards of *Indirectness* and *Inefficiency in Communication and Decision-making*.

With regards to the Portuguese cultural standard of *Indirectness*, German respondents frequently reported that during a conversation they would sometimes not entirely understand what a Portuguese colleague or business partner really wanted to transmit to them or what the actual intention was. As comparatively low-context communicators, Germans are used to receiving clear and concise messages and tend to lack the ability to interpret between the lines and recognize the actual goal of a conversation when communicating with a relatively high-context communicator like Portuguese. For example, in Portugal and other European high-context cultures, as Meyer (2016) explains, the so-called 'subentendido' is regularly used. It is an expression for something that is communicated without saying it directly, which is very unusual in low-context cultures like Germany.

Another typical difference when comparing a low-context culture with a rather high-context culture is the difference in verbal and written communication. As shown in the cultural standard *Inefficiency in Communication and Decision-making*, Germans find it easier to communicate certain concerns in a concise and clear email than having to talk about them. This also applies to meetings, as it was reported in the interviews that these generally

take longer because there is a lot of – from the German perception - unnecessary communication that often doesn't lead to concrete results. According to Meyer (2016), it is more common for high-context cultures that results are less frequently recorded in writing, which is why a German may have the impression that no decisions were made, for instance, when in fact they were.

In summary, Germans not only have difficulties understanding the Portuguese's high-context communication but also may perceive it as inefficient and time-consuming as they are used to communicating in a low-context environment.

### **Evaluating: direct negative feedback vs. indirect negative feedback**

Based on Meyer's model, negative feedback is communicated comparatively less directly in the Portuguese organizational environment than it is in Germany. This supposition was fully confirmed by the cultural standard *Indirectness* and its sub-item *Reserved feedback and criticism*.

Germans perceive the issue of negative feedback or criticism in Portuguese working culture as very sensitive compared to their own culture. In line with a statement in Meyer's book *The Cultural Map* (2016) that Germans often express strong and direct criticism to make it unambiguous and clear (see low-context), some of the interviewees reported that they have and have had difficulties in this respect during their working experience in Portugal. Some of them quickly realized that their German approach to communicating criticism directly and bluntly was not well received by their Portuguese colleagues. A Portuguese person might interpret direct feedback from a German as harsh, lacking respect (see *Pride, respect, and empathy*), and attacking their person. Even though some respondents said that they adapted their feedback style towards a more diplomatically, subtle, and indirect approach, it can nonetheless be very difficult for a German in a Portuguese working context to do so. As the German way of providing negative feedback is significantly influenced by low-context communication as explained above, a German is generally not used to communicating intentional messages indirectly and between the lines.

In order to further strengthen Meyer's claim, the perspective of those who receive criticism must also be presented. Here, some respondents stated that they missed clear feedback regarding their performance, whether positive or negative. Due to the generally less pronounced and also less direct feedback culture in the Portuguese organizational environment, a German may therefore not be able to clearly assess his or her performance and may not feel sufficiently taken into account.



### **Leading: egalitarian vs. hierarchical**

As already mentioned, Meyer based the Leading scale on Hofstede's PDI dimension. However, Meyer assesses Germany differently from Hofstede, as evidenced by the fact that Germany and Portugal are at the same level on the Leading scale but differ relatively clearly on the PDI dimension.

On the basis of Meyer's Leading Scale, a German should therefore not perceive any major differences when working in the Portuguese organizational environment. Yet, as shown in the cultural standard *Strong Understanding of Hierarchy*, this is not the case. The respondents perceived a comparatively greater distance and clearer demarcation between subordinates and superiors than in Germany. The reports also met some of Meyer's assumptions about hierarchical leadership. For example, the assumption that in hierarchical cultures such as the Portuguese, employees expect their superiors to know everything about work-related key questions, was confirmed (Meyer, 2016). In addition, it was striking to the German respondents that their Portuguese colleagues would not contradict the opinion of their superiors, particularly not in front of others.

As noted in the previous section when comparing the results with Hofstede's PDI dimension, this point should be considered with more caution, as it was reported that the younger generation partly no longer follows such a strict understanding of hierarchy in the work context as the older generations do. This could indicate a slow change, similar to Germany, towards a comparatively more egalitarian style of leadership.

### **Deciding: consensual vs. top-down**

Since Germany is presented on this scale as a rather consensual and Portugal comparatively as a top-down decision-making culture, the logical consequence would be that cultural differences in this respect were perceived by the respondents.

Compared to their culture and expressed in the cultural standard of *Strong Understanding of Hierarchy*, German respondents felt that general discourse, as well as decisions, are largely determined by the boss or superior alone. Due to the aforementioned perceived lack of speak-up culture in the Portuguese working environment, decisions are hardly decisively influenced or questioned by the employees. This perception is consistent with Meyer's thesis that most hierarchical cultures such as the Portuguese one - from a German point of view - tend to follow a top-down decision-making approach, where the hierarchically higher person mainly has the decision-making power.

However, this assumption was somewhat contradicted by the cultural standard of *Inefficiency in Communication and Decision-making*. Some interviewees indicated that in Portugal more people are regularly involved in discussions or meetings than in Germany, regardless of whether or not they have the necessary expertise for participating in a

decision-making process. In Germany, by contrast, as an interviewee reported, there is usually a small circle of employees who are very competent about the topic in question and who discuss and ultimately decide together. The author interprets this difference with the aforementioned collectivist character of Portuguese culture and the ambition of Portuguese managers to strengthen the group dynamics and the well-being of the employees by involving them in the discussion process. In the end, however, the boss or supervisor will most likely make the decision alone, which is accepted and respected by subordinates in top-down deciding cultures.

According to Meyer (2016), in more consensus-oriented decision-making cultures such as the German one, it may take more time to make final decisions, but once they are made, they will certainly be implemented. In top-down decision-making cultures like Portugal, decisions tend to be made more quickly but then are often adjusted or revised during the process as new information is added. As a consequence, decisions are often rather preliminary than final in Portugal. This assumption was confirmed during the interviews and is supported by the cultural standards of *Inefficiency in Communication and Decision-making* and *Flexible, Short-term Planning and Improvisation*. Since they are not used to re-discussing a decision that has already been made in their perception, Germans might regard the decision-making process in the Portuguese organizational environment as long and inefficient. Portuguese, on the other hand, might not consider a decision to be final, as they are used to a more flexible approach to be able to respond to changing circumstances.

### **Trusting: task-based vs. relationship-based**

On the Trusting scale, Meyer classifies Portuguese culture as significantly more relationship-based than German culture, which is rather task-based. In this regard, Meyer (2016) explains two different forms of trust: affective and cognitive trust. While affective trust is built through feelings of empathy and emotion, meaning in particular through personal relationships, cognitive trust is built through belief in the abilities, skills, and reliability of other people. Following Meyer (2016) and the positioning of the two cultures on the Trusting scale, this means that in the Portuguese work environment both forms of trust are important and interwoven, whereas in Germany employees tend to separate affective and cognitive trust and rely more on the cognitive form.

This assumption is entirely supported by the cultural standard *Significance of Interpersonal Relations*. It was reported in the interviews that trust in the Portuguese organizational as well as business environment is built on the basis of different, more personal factors than in Germany. It was also confirmed that building trust takes more time in Portugal, but once established, relationships are closer and more long-lasting. According to the respondent's perception, trust in Portugal is primarily built through activities that take

place outside the workplace or business relationships and are rather not related to work. For this reason, Germans perceive relationships in the Portuguese work and business environment as far more personal than factual, as is the case in their own culture.

### **Disagreeing: confrontational vs. avoids confrontation**

According to Meyer, Portuguese culture often deals with disagreement in a less confrontational way than in German culture. In fact, this claim was confirmed by the German interviewees and is mainly supported by the cultural standard of *Emotionality and Sensitivity*.

Reportedly, Portuguese usually avoid direct confrontation and try to find a solution for all parties involved in a debate or disagreement by being diplomatic and seeking harmony. Another reason for the more indirect confrontation is to avoid hurting other people's feelings and thereby exposing them, as this could have a negative impact on the working environment. As already discussed in the presentation of the results, losing face, meaning being embarrassed in front of other people is something that should not happen to a Portuguese. Meyer (2016) also refers to this, pointing out that in cultures where direct confrontation tends to be avoided, group harmony is considered extremely important. If someone loses face during a debate, this can pose a significant threat to harmony and future collaboration.

However, even though direct and open confrontations are more likely to be avoided in the Portuguese working environment, the German respondents perceived a certain emotionality during disagreements and debates. Meyer (2016) explains in her book that cultures can be emotionally expressive or inexpressive on the one hand, and confrontational or confrontation-avoidant on the other. From the reports, it can be concluded that Portuguese are more emotionally expressive in their arguments but avoid direct confrontation. Germans, by contrast, do the opposite, tending to be less emotionally expressive but more open and confrontational when debating. Due to these very different ways of resolving disagreements, misunderstandings can occur in the workplace between Portuguese and Germans.

### **Scheduling: linear-time vs. flexible-time**

Since the greatest difference between Portuguese and German culture is found on the Scheduling Scale, it must be assumed that Germans perceive major cultural differences in this regard. Indeed, Meyer's assumptions were fully confirmed in the context of this scale and supported by three identified cultural standards.

First, the cultural standard of *Irregular Flow of Time* revealed that the German respondents perceived significant differences in the timing of a day in the Portuguese work environment. In contrast to the strongly monochronic, temporally linear German culture, there are less clearly defined working hours in Portugal and more frequent smaller, but also

longer interruptions during the working day. Due to the rather unorganized daily routine from a monochronic German perspective, there tend to be more frequent delays or lateness compared to the German workday.

Concerning the sub-item *Last-minute deadlines* and in line with Meyer's and Hall's theory, the simultaneous handling of multiple tasks is evident in polychronic cultures like Portugal. Since Germans are highly monochronic and tend to complete tasks one step at a time, the characteristic of doing multiple things at the same time stands out to them in day-to-day Portuguese working environment, especially when executing projects and approaching deadlines. Due to frequent last-minute deadline submissions, Germans see a lack of organization and time management, which is the logical consequence when comparing two cultures that have evidently such a different understanding of time as Portuguese and Germans.

The cultural standard of *Flexible, Short-term Planning and Improvisation* also strongly supports the thesis of a monochronic German and polychronic Portuguese culture. The German respondents perceive a significant difference between themselves and their Portuguese colleagues when it comes to planning and commitment to schedules. As Meyer and this cultural standard suggest, polychronic and time-flexible cultures such as Portuguese take a much more flexible approach to planning in order to respond and adapt to changing situations and realities. From a German perspective, this is perceived as an insufficient ability to plan and estimate long-term results. However, it was noted that the highly flexible approach enables the Portuguese to improvise and find quick solutions, something that Germans are rather incapable of, according to the interviewees.

Another cultural standard that clearly supports Meyer's theory of linear and flexible approaches to time is *Inefficiency in Communication and Decision-making*, in particular its sub-item *Unstructured and unproductive meetings*. In terms of meeting culture, the German interviewees noted that they tend to be unstructured, without a real agenda, and take an unnecessarily long time compared to their culture. These observations lead Germans, who are used to following a strict agenda, to perceive meetings in the Portuguese organizational environment as rather inefficient and time-consuming. For Portuguese, on the other hand, and according to Meyer's theory regarding the flow of meetings in flexible-time cultures, it is common not to adhere to a rigidly fixed plan and also to introduce new ideas and topics that were not already planned as topics to be discussed before. These very different understandings of time in the working environment can lead to frustrations on the German as well as on the Portuguese side when working in the respective other culture.

**Persuading: principles-first vs. applications-first**

According to Meyer, Germany and Portugal take a very similar position on the persuading scale, with Portugal following an even stronger principles-first approach. Due to the similar cultural orientation of both countries on this scale, it could not be assumed that the German respondents perceived any major cultural differences. This assumption was confirmed, as the respondents did not explicitly report anything that would have been relevant for an analysis of cultural differences based on this scale.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted throughout this thesis, intercultural encounters in the workplace can create both opportunities and risks. Since, as confirmed, there are major cultural differences between Germany and Portugal in the work context, the likelihood of misunderstandings, frustration, and subsequent unsatisfactory work results is greater than in more culturally similar countries. To minimize or avoid such risks, there is a need for recommended actions that may serve as guidelines for Germans working in Portugal and interacting with Portuguese colleagues. The basis for these recommendations is the literature cited in this thesis as well as the results of the research study.

First, it must be emphasized that the most important thing in intercultural cooperation is the recognition, perception, and acceptance of cultural differences between employees. On this basis, it is possible to openly discuss cultural differences in a team or company and address any doubts or difficulties that need to be resolved to ensure effective cooperation.

In relation to the cultural standard *Strong Understanding of Hierarchy*, it can be stated that German superiors should not push their Portuguese subordinates to express their opinions openly and speak up to them. Their opinion might be opposing and questioning the authority of the superior's leadership role, something a Portuguese would feel uncomfortable with. Instead, a German could politely ask how his or her Portuguese subordinate sees something from different perspectives, therefore removing the pressure. It should be made clear that saying something that may be wrong, even to the boss, is not a problem. In addition, Portuguese subordinates should be given sufficient guidance and regularly checked on to see if everything is working as intended or if any problems have arisen. Towards the end of a deadline, more frequent meetings can be of considerable help. A German superior should keep in mind that Portuguese employees expect their boss to show clear leadership, extensive knowledge, and control of work processes.

As a German working under a Portuguese superior, one should be aware of the leadership role and be careful not to question the superior's opinion or authority too directly and especially in front of other co-workers. Regarding the execution of tasks and their control, a German subordinate could ask his Portuguese supervisor for more autonomy, as this is what people are rather used to from Germany compared to Portugal and which therefore could lead to more efficient work performance.

Regarding the cultural standard of *Emotionality and Sensitivity*, Germans need to be aware of the high importance of interpersonal respect in Portuguese daily and professional life. It should be avoided to offend Portuguese colleagues in their pride, for example, in relation to their country or achievements. From the interviews, it appeared that Germans have a less pronounced national pride or a different attitude toward it. Therefore, a German

may underestimate the importance of this issue and say something that he or she does not consider a sensitive topic, but that a Portuguese may find offensive. In general, it is important to always behave respectfully and considerately, especially in discussions. From the interviewees' stories, it emerged that overly confrontational behavior tends to be counterproductive in the Portuguese work context. Here, Germans should thus try not to act too directly and confrontationally, but to argue diplomatically and consensus-oriented and to strive for an outcome that benefits both sides. Since Germans tend not to avoid confrontation, it might be helpful to make a disagreement less confrontational by using downgrading words such as 'a bit' or 'slightly' instead of strong words such as 'totally' or 'absolutely' (Meyer, 2016).

As for the cultural standard of *Indirectness*, and as Germans are very low-context compared to Portuguese, it will usually be a challenge to always understand the actual intentions of Portuguese colleagues or employees perfectly behind a message. Nevertheless, there are ways of practice to facilitate understanding. Germans need to listen carefully and pay particular attention to the facial expressions and gestures of Portuguese colleagues in addition to what is said (Meyer, 2016). In case of remaining doubts, precise questions help to clarify situations. With an increased duration of working in Portugal and ongoing practice, awareness of such indicators will eventually grow. Regarding the sub-item *Reserved feedback and criticism*, a German should be aware of and adapt his or her comparatively direct style. As described above, unlike in Germany, direct negative feedback is not the norm and is less well received in the Portuguese working environment, particularly in front of other colleagues. Again, a German could soften his criticism by using specific words as just mentioned above. Another option would be to address good things first to take the negative character out of the criticism and hide the actual criticism between positive concessions (Meyer, 2016).

In terms of what the German respondents expressed in the cultural standard of *Inefficiency in Communication and Decision-making*, Germans should be prepared for the fact that in the Portuguese work environment, communication is much more verbal than written, which may seem inefficient from a German perspective. Nevertheless, it is advisable to adapt to this approach in order not to miss any important information in work or decision-making processes. The high proportion of verbal communication is particularly noticeable to Germans in meetings, which they perceive as long, unstructured, and less factual. As a general rule and for the understanding of all participants, a German – whether team leader or member - could suggest that results, decisions, and pending tasks should always be recorded in writing, for example in bullet points, and repeated at the end of a meeting. In this way, there is a better overview and planning structure, which ultimately provides a German with more stability when carrying out tasks.

However, about the cultural standard of *Flexible, Short-term Planning and Improvisation*, Germans should be aware that in the Portuguese work context, decisions that have been agreed upon and written down are to be considered rather preliminary than final. They may change or be revised in the course of the process depending on further circumstances. Therefore, to avoid frustrations in the implementation process, a German should keep in mind the high degree of flexibility in the Portuguese working environment and train to adapt to changing circumstances. In this context, it might be helpful to agree on different alternative plans when decisions are made. In addition, Germans should, in comparison to their own culture, avoid relying on long-term plans for the just mentioned reasons.

When considering the cultural standard of *Irregular Flow of Time*, it can be stated that a monochronic-poled German does not really have another choice but to adapt to the comparatively highly polychronic Portuguese working environment. Since everything happens less linearly than in Germany, one has to adapt to cultural peculiarities such as more frequent breaks or more flexible and later working hours. Even though Germans cannot exert much influence in this area, a German team leader could, for instance, establish the general rule of always arriving on time for meetings. However, interfering with the culturally different daily rhythms by, for example, scheduling meetings too early (before 10:00 am) should be avoided.

As for the cultural standard of *Significance of Interpersonal Relations*, Germans may try to adapt by interacting with their Portuguese colleagues on a more personal level compared to their own culture. It should be kept in mind that in the Portuguese work context, interactions do not only take place on a mainly factual level, but also extra-professional matters play an important role in building a relationship. Germans should therefore not be afraid to talk to their colleagues about their hobbies, interests, or family, as this is less of a privacy issue in Portugal than in Germany and helps to build trust. Since, as mentioned above, oral communication is generally preferred over written communication, a German should try to spend enough time on direct and personal communication and less on written communication via e-mail, if possible. Suitable topics include for example politics, sports, family, and food. In Portugal much revolves around food, which is why going out to eat together can often be the start of a trusting working relationship. For this reason, a German should be aware of this high importance and accept invitations to lunch or dinner or approach Portuguese colleagues and invite them to eat together.



## 8. LIMITATIONS

Following the research study and in order to be able to consider it in a comprehensible framework, it is also necessary to discuss its limitations.

First, the sample size must be addressed. Even though the study took a qualitative approach, it could be argued that ten respondents are too few to get a general valid picture of Portuguese cultural standards from the German perspective. Since many of the statements and also the feedback of the respondents coincided, the author of this thesis eventually found the number of respondents acceptable.

Furthermore, the results of the research study model could have been compared with other cultural dimension models described in 2.2.1, but the limited scope of the thesis did not allow it to do so. Instead, the author decided to compare the research results with Hofstede's and Meyer's models for reasons already explained above.

Then, as indicated earlier, there may be varying behaviors and culturally determined characteristics depending on specific industries. However, since this thesis is concerned with cultural differences in the workplace between Germans and Portuguese in general, it was attempted to include respondents from different industries in order to obtain an overall and cross-industry impression.

Almost all of the respondents reported about work experiences that they have or had directly at their workplace. Since nowadays many companies rely on remote work and employees are less often in physical contact with each other, the perception of the culturally different colleagues could also change. In fact, the comments of the two interviewees who mostly met their colleagues online were less detailed and less characterized by critical incidents than those who were in direct physical contact with their colleagues.

Finally, it must be mentioned that the author of this thesis is of German nationality. Even though it was attempted to conduct the research study with the highest degree of neutrality and objectivity, cultural bias that could affect the evaluation and interpretation of the results can never be entirely avoided. However, the cultural standards identified were not only confirmed in their expression and content by Germans and additionally Portuguese working in Portugal, but also show correspondences with established cultural models in this field of research. For these reasons, it can be assumed that certain cultural behavior patterns were indeed identified as a result of this work.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to research cultural differences resulting from intercultural interactions between Germans and Portuguese in organizational settings. As a consequence, Portuguese cultural standards from the German perspective were identified. These cultural standards, which are commonly perceived patterns of behavior, can serve as a guide for Germans in the Portuguese organizational and business environment, that is, in their interactions with Portuguese colleagues.

The study built on the experiences of ten German nationals who either live and work in Portugal or have done so in the past for at least one year. To ensure a representative research result, the sample consisted of respondents from different industries, professional positions, ages, and genders.

As described, the qualitative methodology approach selected for the research study of this thesis was Alexander Thomas' Cultural Standards Method, which is mainly based on three processes. First, narrative interviews were conducted with all ten Germans comprising the sample. Then, the content of the interviews was examined for critical incidents using qualitative content analysis. Finally, on the basis of the critical incidents and after feedback from the interviewees and further Germans as well as Portuguese working in Portugal that didn't participate in the study, seven final cultural standards were identified.

The following Portuguese cultural standards from a German perspective in the organizational environment showed pronounced cultural differences between Germans and Portuguese.

1. *Strong Understanding of Hierarchy*: The German respondents reported considerably higher distances between superiors and subordinates in the Portuguese working environment. In addition to the special role of the boss, a less pronounced speak-up culture, a lower sense of individual responsibility, and a less autonomous work style were perceived.
2. *Emotionality and Sensitivity*: Portuguese were perceived by Germans as more emotional and sensitive. Here, the importance of mutual respect, empathy, and pride was highlighted. Furthermore, the Portuguese's need for harmony was emphasized, which is why direct and open confrontations were recognized to be less appreciated. Instead, conflicts are generally tried to be resolved diplomatically and consensually.
3. *Indirectness*: The German interviewees perceived their Portuguese colleagues as more indirect and sometimes have problems interpreting messages correctly. It was pointed out that the Portuguese would have difficulties in directly addressing their

intentions and problems. Also, feedback and criticism were found to be communicated considerably less direct than in Germany.

4. *Inefficiency in Communication and Decision-making*: Germans felt that in the Portuguese work environment there was a much higher level of personal and verbal communication. This would ultimately affect the flow of meetings and decision-making processes, which are subsequently perceived as rather long and less efficient.
5. *Irregular Flow of Time*: The German respondents perceived the issue of time to be more variable in the Portuguese work environment. Here, the different working rhythm with later working hours, frequent small breaks, and longer lunch breaks were emphasized. In addition, Germans noticed a culturally different attitude of their Portuguese colleagues towards the aspects of punctuality and deadlines.
6. *Flexible, Short-term Planning and Improvisation*: Portuguese colleagues were seen by Germans as more short-term thinking, planning, and acting accordingly. It was stated that plans are often not implemented as they were originally decided. Instead, from a German perspective, processes are held flexible, and improvisation is frequently used to accomplish tasks or projects.
7. *Significance of Interpersonal Relations*: The German respondents reported of more personal than merely factual relationships in the Portuguese workplace. They also expressed that trust and successful cooperation with Portuguese in organizational and business settings is not mainly established through work-related activities, but to a significant extent through personal points of reference and interests outside of work.

Following the research study, the culture standards were compared to Geert Hofstede's culture dimension model as well as Erin Meyer's eight culture scales model. As for Hofstede's culture dimensions, correspondences were identified with each dimension except for *Indulgence vs. Restraint*. The *Uncertainty Avoidance* dimension was partially confirmed in interpretation, but also contradicted at the same time. Of Meyer's eight scales, six were clearly confirmed. The research results could not support Meyer's *Leading* scale, as Germans perceived a more hierarchical style in Portugal. Secondly, no cultural differences could be found that support the *Persuading* scale.

Even though the research findings are largely supported by Hofstede and Meyer's models, and vice versa, this does not mean that they represent the entire Portuguese culture, but rather certain typical behavioral patterns of the majority of Portuguese in the work context. However, there can be behaviors that deviate to some extent from the identified cultural standards.

Since managing intercultural encounters will continue to be critical to success in the international organizational and business environment, there is a constant need for research in this area. Whenever people interact in a culturally diverse environment, challenges, risks, but also opportunities for personal development arise. This thesis examined how people from one culture perceive the behavior of people from another culture in the work environment. Following the research study, recommendations were made for the behavior of Germans in the Portuguese work environment. Since the scope of this paper is limited, these recommendations could not be elaborated upon. However, the results of this research study could serve as a foundation for developing practical intercultural training programs for Germans already living and working in Portugal or planning to do so in the future. Intercultural training can lead to increased cultural awareness, fewer misunderstandings with culturally different colleagues, and thus better work outcomes and job satisfaction in a multicultural organization.

As the research study of this thesis was very comprehensive and included participants from all industries and professional positions, further studies could have a more specific research objective. For example, the same study could be conducted exclusively with managers or employees, or only in specific industries such as consumer goods, telecommunications, textiles, or tourism. In addition, such research studies could also be conducted only with remote workers to explore the extent to which cultural differences are perceived in the work environment without physical contact.

Finally, it would be of great interest to determine the German cultural standards from the Portuguese perspective and thus obtain a reverse picture of the present study. Identifying the cultural standards from the respective other perspective would contribute to gaining a more detailed overall picture of German-Portuguese interactions in the work context.

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**APPENDIX 1: Hofstede’s Power Distance Index – 75 Country scores  
(Hofstede Insights, 2022)**

Country	Score	Country	Score	Country	Score
Malaysia	104	Brazil	69	Italy	50
Slovakia	104	France	68	Argentina	49
Guatemala	95	Hong Kong	68	South Africa	49
Panama	95	Poland	68	Trinidad	47
Philippines	94	French Belgium	67	Hungary	46
Russia	93	Colombia	67	Jamaica	45
Romania	90	El Salvador	66	Latvia	44
Serbia	86	Turkey	66	Lithuania	42
Suriname	85	East Africa	64	Estonia	40
Mexico	81	Peru	64	Luxembourg	40
Venezuela	81	Thailand	64	United States	40
Arab countries	80	Chile	63	Canada	39
Bangladesh	80	<b>Portugal</b>	<b>63</b>	Netherlands	38
China	80	Dutch Belgium	61	Australia	38
Ecuador	78	Uruguay	61	Costa Rica	35
Indonesia	78	Greece	60	<b>Germany</b>	<b>35</b>
India	77	South Korea	60	Great Britain	35
West Africa	77	Iran	58	Finland	33
Singapore	74	Taiwan	58	Norway	31
Croatia	73	Czech Republic	57	Ireland	28
Slovenia	71	Spain	57	German Switzerland	26
Bulgaria	70	Malta	56	New Zealand	22
Morocco	70	Pakistan	55	Denmark	18
French Switzerland	70	French Canada	54	Israel	13
Vietnam	70	Japan	54	Austria	11

**APPENDIX 2: Hofstede’s Individualism Index – 75 Country scores (Hofstede Insights, 2022)**

Country	Score	Country	Score	Country	Score
United States	91	Malta	59	<b>Portugal</b>	<b>27</b>
Australia	90	Czech Republic	58	Slovenia	27
Great Britain	89	Austria	55	Malaysia	26
Canada	80	Israel	54	Hong Kong	25
Hungary	80	Slovakia	52	Serbia	25
Netherlands	80	Spain	51	Chile	23
New Zealand	79	India	48	Bangladesh	20
Dutch Belgium	78	Suriname	47	China	20
Italy	76	Argentina	46	Singapore	20
Denmark	74	Japan	46	Thailand	20
French Canada	73	Morocco	46	Vietnam	20
French Belgium	72	Iran	41	West Africa	20
France	71	Jamaica	39	El Salvador	19
Sweden	71	Russia	39	South Korea	18
Ireland	70	Arab countries	38	Taiwan	17
Latvia	70	Brazil	38	Peru	16
Norway	69	Turkey	37	Trinidad	16
German Switzerland	69	Uruguay	36	Costa Rica	15
<b>Germany</b>	<b>67</b>	Greece	35	Indonesia	14
South Africa	65	Croatia	33	Pakistan	14
French Switzerland	64	Philippines	32	Colombia	13
Finland	63	Bulgaria	30	Venezuela	12
Estonia	60	Mexico	30	Panama	11
Lithuania	60	Romania	30	Ecuador	8
Poland	60	East Africa	27	Guatemala	6

**APPENDIX 3: Hofstede’s Masculinity Index – 75 Country scores (Hofstede Insights, 2022)**

Country	Score	Country	Score	Country	Score
Slovakia	104	Hong Kong	57	Romania	42
Japan	95	Argentina	56	Spain	42
Hungary	88	India	56	East Africa	41
Austria	79	Bangladesh	55	Bulgaria	40
Venezuela	73	Arab countries	53	Croatia	40
German Switzerland	72	Morocco	53	El Salvador	40
Italy	70	Canada	52	Vietnam	40
Mexico	69	Luxembourg	50	South Korea	39
Ireland	68	Malaysia	50	Uruguay	38
Jamaica	68	Pakistan	50	Guatemala	37
China	66	Brazil	49	Suriname	37
<b>Germany</b>	<b>66</b>	Singapore	48	Russia	36
Great Britain	66	Israel	47	Russia	34
Colombia	64	Malta	47	<b>Portugal</b>	<b>31</b>
Philippines	64	Indonesia	46	Estonia	30
Poland	64	West Africa	46	Chile	28
South Africa	63	French Canada	45	Finland	26
Ecuador	63	Taiwan	45	Costa Rica	21
United States	<b>62</b>	Turkey	45	Lithuania	19
Australia	61	Panama	44	Slovenia	19
French Belgium	60	Dutch Belgium	43	Denmark	16
New Zealand	58	France	43	Netherlands	14
French Switzerland	58	Iran	43	Latvia	9
Czech Republic	57	Serbia	43	Norway	8
Greece	57	Peru	42	Sweden	5

**APPENDIX 4: Hofstede’s Uncertainty Avoidance Index – 75 Country scores (Hofstede Insights, 2022)**

Country	Score	Country	Score	Country	Score
Greece	112	Hungary	82	German Switzerland	56
<b>Portugal</b>	<b>104</b>	Mexico	82	Trinidad	55
Guatemala	101	Israel	81	West Africa	54
Uruguay	100	Colombia	80	Netherlands	53
Dutch Belgium	97	Croatia	80	East Africa	52
Malta	96	Brazil	76	Australia	51
Russia	95	Venezuela	76	Slovakia	51
El Salvador	94	Italy	75	Norway	50
French Belgium	93	Czech Republic	74	New Zealand	49
Poland	93	Austria	70	South Africa	49
Japan	92	Luxembourg	70	Canada	48
Serbia	92	Pakistan	70	Indonesia	48
Suriname	92	French Switzerland	70	United States	46
Romania	90	Taiwan	69	Philippines	44
Slovenia	88	Arab countries	68	India	40
Peru	87	Morocco	68	Malaysia	36
Argentina	86	Ecuador	67	Great Britain	35
Chile	86	<b>Germany</b>	<b>65</b>	Ireland	35
Costa Rica	86	Lithuania	65	China	30
France	86	Thailand	64	Vietnam	30
Panama	86	Bangladesh	60	Hong Kong	29
Spain	86	French Canada	60	Sweden	29
Bulgaria	85	Estonia	60	Denmark	23
South Korea	85	Finland	59	Jamaica	13
Turkey	85	Iran	59	Singapore	8

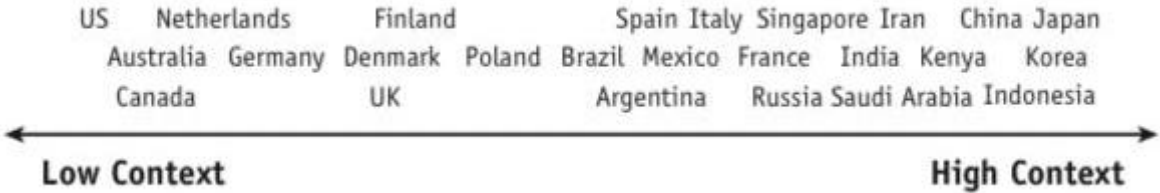
**APPENDIX 5: Hofstede’s Long-Term Orientation Index – 75 Country scores (Hofstede Insights, 2022)**

Country	Score	Country	Score	Country	Score
South Korea	100	Croatia	58	East Africa	32
Taiwan	93	Hungary	58	Thailand	32
Japan	88	Vietnam	57	Chile	31
China	87	Sweden	53	<b>Portugal</b>	<b>28</b>
Ukraine	86	Serbia	52	Iceland	28
<b>Germany</b>	<b>83</b>	Romania	52	Philippines	27
Estonia	82	Great Britain	51	Uruguay	26
Belgium	82	India	51	United States	26
Lithuania	82	Pakistan	50	Peru	25
Russia	81	Slovenia	49	Ireland	24
Slovakia	77	Spain	48	Mexico	24
Switzerland	74	Malta	47	Arab countries	23
Singapore	72	Bangladesh	47	Australia	21
Czech Republic	70	Turkey	46	Argentina	20
Bulgaria	69	Greece	45	El Salvador	20
Latvia	69	Brazil	44	Venezuela	16
Netherlands	67	Malaysia	41	Morocco	14
Luxembourg	64	Finland	38	Iran	14
France	63	Poland	38	Dominican Republic	13
Indonesia	62	Israel	38	Colombia	13
Italy	61	Canada	36	Trinidad	13
Albania	61	Denmark	35	West Africa	9
Hong Kong	61	Norway	35	Egypt	7
Armenia	61	South Africa	34	Ghana	4
Austria	60	New Zealand	33	Puerto Rico	0

**APPENDIX 6: Hofstede’s Indulgence vs. Restraint Index – 75 Country scores (Hofstede Insights, 2022)**

Country	Score	Country	Score	Country	Score
Venezuela	100	Malaysia	57	Hungary	31
Mexico	97	Belgium	57	Italy	30
Puerto Rico	90	Norway	55	South Korea	29
El Salvador	89	Dominican Republic	54	Czech Republic	29
Colombia	83	Uruguay	53	Poland	29
Trinidad	80	Greece	50	Slovakia	28
West Africa	78	Turkey	49	Serbia	28
Sweden	78	Taiwan	49	India	26
New Zealand	75	France	48	Morocco	25
Australia	71	Slovenia	48	China	24
Denmark	70	Peru	46	Russia	20
Great Britain	69	Singapore	46	Romania	20
Netherlands	68	Thailand	45	Montenegro	20
Canada	68	Bosnia	44	Bangladesh	20
United States	68	Spain	44	Hong Kong	17
Chile	68	Philippines	42	Iraq	17
Iceland	67	Japan	42	Estonia	16
Switzerland	66	Iran	40	Bulgaria	16
Malta	66	<b>Germany</b>	<b>40</b>	Lithuania	16
Ireland	65	East Africa	40	Belarus	15
South Africa	63	Indonesia	38	Albania	15
Austria	63	Vietnam	35	Ukraine	14
Argentina	62	Arab countries	34	Latvia	13
Brazil	59	<b>Portugal</b>	<b>33</b>	Egypt	4
Finland	57	Croatia	33	Pakistan	0

**APPENDIX 7: Erin Meyer’s Communicating Scale (Meyer, 2016, p.39)**



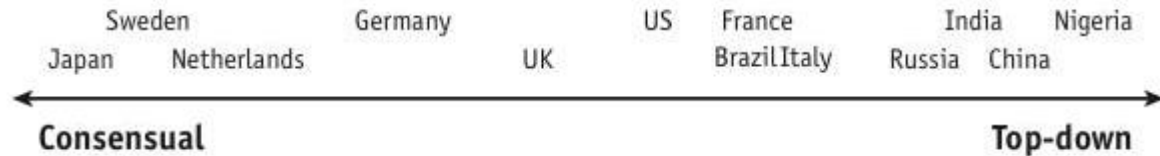
**APPENDIX 8: Erin Meyer’s Evaluating Scale (Meyer, 2016, p.69)**



**APPENDIX 9: Erin Meyer’s Leading Scale (Meyer, 2016, p.125)**



**APPENDIX 10: Erin Meyer’s Deciding Scale (Meyer, 2016, p.150)**



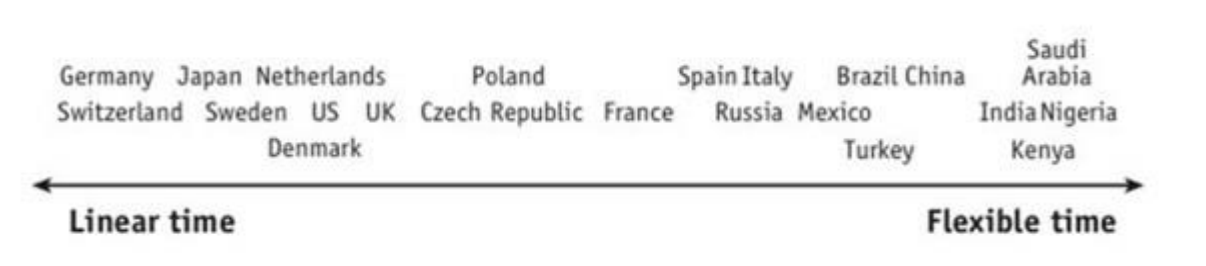
**APPENDIX 11: Erin Meyer's Trusting Scale (Meyer, 2016, p.171)**



**APPENDIX 12: Erin Meyer's Disagreeing Scale (Meyer, 2016, p.201)**



**APPENDIX 13: Erin Meyer's Scheduling Scale (Meyer, 2016, p.227)**



**APPENDIX 14: Erin Meyer's Persuading Scale (Meyer, 2016, p.96)**

